

*Gal 9 L<sup>1</sup>c*  
Q. HORATII FLACCI  
E P I S T O L A E  
A D  
P I S O N E S,  
E T  
A U G U S T U M:

WITH AN ENGLISH  
COMMENTARY AND NOTES:  
TO WHICH ARE ADDED  
CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS.

BY THE  
REVEREND MR. HURD.  
THE FIFTH EDITION,  
CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

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TO THE REVEREND  
MR. W A R B U R T O N.

REVEREND SIR,

GIVE me leave to present to you the following Essay on the *Epistle to Augustus*; which, whatever other merit it may want, is secure of this, that it hath been planned upon the best model. For I know not what should hinder me from declaring to you in this public manner, that it was the early pleasure I received from what you had written of this sort, which *first* engaged me in the province of criticism. And, if I have taken upon

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me to illustrate *another* of the finest pieces of antiquity after the *same method*, it is because I find myself encouraged to do so by higher considerations, than even the Authority of your example.

CRITICISM, considered in its antient and noblest office of doing justice to the merits of great writers, more especially in works of poetry and invention, demands, to its perfect execution, these two qualities: *a philosophic spirit*, capable of penetrating the fundamental reasons of excellence in every different species of composition; and *a strong imagination*, the parent of what we call *true taste*, enabling the critic to feel the full force of his author's excellence himself, and to impress a lively sense of it upon others. Each of these abilities is necessary. For by means of philosophy, criticism, which were otherwise a vague and superficial thing, acquires

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acquires the soundness and solidity of science. And from the *power of fancy*, it derives that light and energy and spirit, which are wanting to provoke the public emulation and carry the general conclusions of reason into practice.

Of these talents (to regard them in their separate state) that of a *strong imagination*, as being the commoner of the two, one would naturally suppose should be the first to exert itself in the service of criticism. And thus it seems, in fact, to have happened. For there were very early in Greece a sort of men, who, under the name of RHAPSODISTS, made it their business to illustrate the beauties of their favourite writers. Though their art, indeed, was very simple; for it consisted only in *acting* the finest passages of their works, and in *repeating* them, with a rapturous kind of vehemence, to an

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ecstatic auditory. Whence it appears, that criticism, as being yet in its infancy, was wholly turned to *admiration*; a passion which true *judgment* as little indulges in the schools of *Art*, as sound philosophy, in those of *Nature*. Accordingly these enraptured declaimers, though they travelled down to the politer ages, could not subsist in them. The fine ridicule of Plato, in one of his Dialogues [a], and the growing taste for just thinking, seem perfectly to have discredited this folly. And it was presently seen and acknowledged even by the Rhapsodist himself, that, how *divinely* soever he might feel himself affected by the magnetic virtue of the muse, yet, as he could give no intelligible account of its subtle operations, he was assuredly no *Artist*;

ΘΕΙΟΝ εἶναι ἔ μὴ ΤΕΧΝΙΚΟΝ ἐπαίνε-  
την.

[a] ION.

From

## D E D I C A T I O N.      vii

From this time they, who took upon themselves the office of commenting and recommending the great writers of Greece, discharged it in a very different manner. Their researches grew severe, inquisitive, and rational. And no wonder; for the person, who now took the lead in these studies, and set the fashion of them, was a *philosopher*, and, which was happy for the advancement of this art, the justest philosopher of antiquity. Hence *scientific* or speculative criticism attained to perfection, at once; and appeared in all that severity of reason and accuracy of method, which Aristotle himself could bestow upon it.

But now this might almost seem as violent an extreme as the other. For though to *understand* be better than to *admire*, yet the generality of readers *cannot*, or *will not*, understand, where there is *nothing* for them to admire.

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So that *reason*, for her own sake, is obliged to borrow something of the dress, and to mimic the airs, of *fancy*: And Aristotle's *reason* was too proud to submit to this management,

Hence, the critical plan, which the Stagyrte had formed with such rigour of science, however it might satisfy the curious speculatist, wanted to be *relieved* and set off to the common eye by the heightenings of eloquence. This, I observed, was the easier task of the two; and yet it was very long before it was *successfully* attempted. Amongst other reasons of this delay, the principal, as you observe, might be the fall of the public freedom of Greece, which soon after followed. For then, instead of the free and manly efforts of genius, which alone could accomplish such a reformation, the trifling spirit of the times declined into mere verbal amusements. “ Whence, as you say, so  
“ great



# DEDICATION. ix

“great a cloud of scholiasts and grammarians so soon overspread the learning of Greece, when once that famous community had lost its liberty [b].”

And what Greece was thus unable, of a long time, to furnish, we shall in vain seek in another great community, which soon after flourished in all liberal studies. The genius of Rome was bold and elevated enough for this task. But Criticism of any kind was little cultivated, never professed as an *art*, by this people. The specimens we have of their ability in this way (of which the most elegant, beyond dispute, are the two epistles to *Augustus* and the *Pisos*) are slight occasional attempts; made in the negligence of common sense, and adapted to the peculiar exigencies of their own taste and learning: and not by any

[b] Pope's Works, vol. v. p. 244. 8<sup>th</sup>.

means

## x DEDICATION.

means the regular productions of *art*, professedly bending itself to this work, and ambitious to give the last finishing to the critical system.

For so great an effort as this, we are to look back to the confines of Greece. And there at length, and even from beneath the depression of slavery (but with a spirit that might have done honour to its age of greatest liberty), a CRITIC arose, singularly qualified for so generous an undertaking. His profession, which was that of a *rhetorical sophist*, required him to be fully instructed in the graces and embellishments of eloquence; and these, the vigour of his genius enabled him to comprehend in their utmost force and beauty. In a word, LONGINUS was the person, whom, of all the critics of antiquity, nature seems to have formed with the proper talents to give the last honour



# DEDICATION. xi

to his profession, and penetrate the very soul of fine writing.

Yet so bounded is human *wit*, and with such difficulty is human *art* completed, that even here the advantage, which had been so fortunately gained on the one hand, was, in great measure, lost and forfeited on the other. He had softened indeed the severity of Aristotle's plan; but, in doing this, had gone back again too far into the manner of the admiring Rhapsodist. In short, with the brightest views of nature and true beauty, which the finest imagination could afford to the best critic, he now wanted, in a good degree, that precision, and depth of thought, which had so eminently distinguished his predecessor. For, as Plotinus long ago observed of him, *though he had approved himself a master of polite literature, he was no Philosopher*; ΦΙΛΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΜΕΝ, ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΟΣ ΔΕ ΟΥΔΑΜΩΣ.

Thus

## iii DEDICATION.

Thus the art had been shifting reciprocally into two extremes. And in one or other of these extremes, it was likely to continue. For the fame and eminent ability of their great founders had made them considered as *models*, in their different ways, of perfect criticism. Only it was easy to foresee which of them the humour of succeeding times would be most disposed to emulate. The catching enthusiasm and picturesque fancy of the *one* would be sure to prevail over the coolness and austerity of the *other*. Accordingly in the last and present century, when now the diligence of learned men had, by restoring the purity, opened an easy way to the study, of the old classics, a numberless tribe of commentators have attempted, after the manner of Longinus, to *flourish* on the excellencies of their composition. And some of them, indeed, succeeded so well in this method,

# DEDICATION. xiii

thod, that one is not to wonder it soon became the popular and only authorized form of what was reputed *just Criticism*. Yet, as nothing but superior genius could make it tolerable even in the best of these, it was to be expected (what experience hath now fully shewn), that it would at length, and in ordinary hands, degenerate into the most unmeaning, frivolous, and disgusting jargon, that ever discredited polite letters.

This, Sir, was the state in which you received *modern Criticism*: a state, which could only shew you, that, of the two models, antiquity had furnished to our use, we had learned, by an awkward imitation of it, to abuse the *worst*. But it did not content your zeal for the service of letters barely to remedy this *abuse*. It was not enough, in your enlarged view of things, to restore either of these models to its an-

#### xiv DEDICATION.

tient splendour. They were both to be revived ; or rather a new original plan of criticism was to be struck out, which should unite the virtues of each of them. The experiment was made on the two greatest of our own poets ; and, by reflecting all the lights of the imagination on the severest reason, every thing was effected, which the warmest admirer of antient art could promise to himself from such an union. But you went farther. By joining to these powers a perfect insight into human nature, and so ennobling the exercise of *literary*, by the addition of the justest moral, censure, you have now, at length, advanced CRITICISM to its full glory.

Not but, considering the inveterate foible of mankind, which the poet so justly satirizes in the following work, I mean that, which disposes them to malign and depreciate all the efforts of wit and virtue,

—nisi

## DEDICATION. xv

— nisi quae terris semota suisque  
Temporibus defuncta videt —

Considering, I say, this temper of mankind, you may sooner, perhaps, expect the censures of the dull and envious of all denominations, than the candid applause of the public, even for this service.

I apprehend this consequence the rather, because criticism, though it be *the last fruit of literary experience*, is more exposed to the cavils of ignorance and vanity, than, perhaps, any other species of learned application: all men being forward to judge, and few men giving themselves leave to doubt of their being able to judge, of the merits of well-known and popular writers.

Nor is this all: When writers of a certain rank condescend to this work of criticism, the innovation excites a  
very

xvi DEDICATION.

very natural ferment in the *men of the profession.*

Their JEALOUSY is alarmed, as if there was a design to strip them of the only honour they can reasonably pretend to, that of sitting in judgment on the *inventions* of their betters. But to JUDGE, as well as to INVENT, is thought a violent encroachment in the republic of Letters; not unlike the ambition of the Roman emperors, who would be consuls, and censors too, that is, would have the privilege of excluding from the senate, as well as of presiding in it.

But if jealousy were out of the case, their MALIGNITY would be much inflamed by this intrusion. For who can bear to see his own weak endeavours, in any art, disgraced by a consummate model?

Besides, to say the truth, the conceptions of such writers, as I before spoke



## D E D I C A T I O N. xvii

spoke of, lie so remote from vulgar apprehension, that, without either *jealousy* or *malignity*, DULLNESS itself will be sure to create them many peevish detractors. For an ordinary critic can scarce help finding fault with what he does not understand, or being angry where he has no ideas.

On all these accounts, it may possibly happen, as I said, that your critical labours will draw upon you much popular resentment and invective.

But if such should be the *present* effect of your endeavours to cultivate and complete this elegant part of literature; you, who know the temper of the learned world, and, by your eminent merits, have so oft provoked its injustice, will not be disturbed or surprized at it: much less should it discourage those who

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are disposed to do you more right, from celebrating, and, as they find themselves able, from copying your example;

For USE will father what's begot by SENSE, as well in this, as in other instances.

YOU SEE, Sir, what there is of encomium in the turn of this Letter, was intended not so much for your sake, as my own. Had my purpose been any other, I must have chosen very ill among the various parts of your character to take *this* for the subject of an address to you. For, after all I have said and think of your critical abilities, it might seem almost as strange in a panegyrist on Mr. Warburton to tell of his admirable criticisms on POPE and SHAKESPEARE, as it would be in him, who should design an encomium on Socrates, to insist on his excellent sculpture



DEDICATION. xix  
ture of MERCURY and the GRACES.  
Yet there is a time, when it may be  
allowed to lay a stress on the amuse-  
ments of such men. It is, when an  
adventurer in either *art* would do an  
honour to his profession.

*I am,*

*with the truest esteem,*

*Reverend Sir,*

*Your most obedient*

*and most humble servant,*

CAMBRIDGE,  
March 29, 1753.

R. HURD.

# DEDICATION.

YET there is a time, when it may be  
allowed to lay a hand on the sword.  
agents of such men. It is, when an  
adventurer in either art would do an  
honour to his profession.

With the best of wishes,

Respectfully,  
R. MURD.

Your most obedient

and most humble servant,

R. MURD.

[1]

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Q. HORATII FLACCI  
EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM.

CUM tot sustineas et tanta negotia solus,  
Res Italas armis tuteris, moribus ornes,  
Legibus emendes; in publica commoda peccem;  
Si longo sermone morer tua tempora, Caesar.

COMMENTARY.

[EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM.] In conducting this work, which is an *apology* for the poets of his own time, the method of the writer is no other, than that which plain sense, and the subject itself, required of him. For, as the main dislike to the Augustan poets had arisen from an *excessive reverence* paid to their elder brethren, the *first* part of the epistle [from line 1 to 118] is very naturally laid out in the ridicule and confutation of so absurd a prejudice. And having, by this preparation, obtained a candid hearing for his defence, he then proceeds [in what follows, to the end] to vindicate their real *merits*; setting in view the excellencies of the *Latin poetry*, as cultivated by the great modern masters; and throwing the blame of their ill success, and of the contempt in which they had lain, not so much on themselves, or their *profession* (the dignity of which, in particular, he insists highly upon, and asserts with spirit) as on the vicious

## 2 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Romulus, et Liber pater, et cum Castore Pollux, 5  
Post ingentia fata, Deorum in templa recepti,  
Dum terras hominumque colunt genus, aspera  
bella

Componunt, agros adsignant, oppida condunt;  
Ploravere suis non respondere favorem  
Speratum meritis. diram qui contudit Hydrām, 10  
Notaque fatali portenta labore subegit,  
Comperit invidiam supremo fine domari.

### COMMENTARY.

taste of the age, and certain unfavouring circumstances, which had accidentally concurred to dishonour both.

This idea of the *general* plan being comprehended, the reader will find it no difficulty to perceive the order and arrangement of *particular* parts, which the natural transition of the poet's thought insensibly drew along with it.

5—118. ROMULUS, ET LIBER PATER, &c.] The subject commences from line 5, where, by a contrivance of great beauty, a pertinent *illustration* of the poet's argument becomes an offering of the happiest *address* to the emperor. Its *double* purpose may be seen thus. His primary intention was to take off the force of prejudice against *modern* poets, arising from the superior veneration of the *antients*. To this end the first thing wanting was to demonstrate by some striking instance, that it was, indeed, nothing but *prejudice*; which he does effectually in taking that instance from the *heroic*, that is, the most revered, ages. For if such, whose acknowledged virtues and eminent services

# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 3.

Urit enim fulgore suo, qui prægravat artis  
Infra se positas: extinctus amabitur idem.

Præsentì tibi maturos largimur honores, 15

Jurandasque tuum per numen ponimus aras,

Nil oriturum alias, nil ortum tale fatentes.

Sed tuus hoc populus sapiens et justus in uno,

Te nostris ducibus, te Graiis antefereudo,

Cetera nequaquam simili ratione modoque 20

## COMMENTARY.

services had raised them to the rank of *heroes*, that is, in the pagan conception of things, to the honours of *divinity*, could not secure their fame, in their own times, against the malevolence of slander, what wonder that the race of *twits*, whose obscurer merit is less likely to dazzle the public eye, and yet, by a peculiar fatality, is more apt to awaken its jealousy, should find themselves oppressed by its rudest censure? In the former case, the honours, which equal posterity paid to excelling worth, declare all *such* censure to have been the calumny of malice only. What reason then to conclude, it had any other original in the *latter*? This is the poet's *argument*.

But now, of these worthies themselves, whom the justice of grateful posterity had snatched out of the hands of detraction, there were some, it seems, whose illustrious services the virtue, or vain-glory of the emperor, most affected to emulate; and these, therefore, the poet, by an ingenious flattery, selects for examples to his general *observation*,

*Romulus, et Liber pater, et cum Castore Pollux*

*Post ingentia fata, &c.*

B 2

Further,

## 4. Q. HORATII FLACCI

Aestimât; et, nisi quæ terris semota suisque  
 Temporibus defuncta videt, fastidit et odit :  
 Sic fautor veterum, ut Tabulas peccare vetantis,  
 Quas bis quinque viri sanxerunt, Foedera regum  
 Vel Gabiis vel cum rigidis aequata Sabinis, 25  
 Pontificum libros, annosa volumina Vatum,

### COMMENTARY.

Further, as the good fortune of Augustus, though adorned with the *same* enviable qualities, had exempted *him* from the injuries which had constantly befallen *those* admired characters, this peculiar circumstance in the history of his prince affords him the happiest occasion, flattery could desire, of paying distinguished honours to his glory.

*Præsentî tibi maturos largimur honores.*

And this constitutes the fine *address* and *compliment* of his application.

But this justice, which Augustus had exacted, as it were, by the very authority of his virtue, from his applauding people, was but ill discharged in other instances.

*Sed tuus hoc populus sapiens et iustus in uno,*

*Te nostris duribus, te Graiis antefereudo,*

*Cetera naquaquam simili ratione modoque*

*Aestimât, &c.*

And thus the very *exception* to the general rule, which forms the encomium, leads him with advantage into his *argument*; which was to observe and expose "the malignant influence of prepossession, in obstructing the proper glories of living merit." So that, as good sense demands in every reasonable panegyric, the praise results from the nature and foundation of the



## EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 3

Disstitet Albano Musas in monte locutas.  
 Si, quia Graiorum sunt antiquissima quaeque  
 Scripta vel optima, Romani pensantur eadem  
 Scriptores trutina; non est quod multa loquamur:  
 Nil intra est olea, nil extra est in nuce duri:  
 Venimus ad summum fortunae: pingimus, atque

### COMMENTARY.

the subject-matter, and is not violently and reluctantly dragged into it.

His general charge against his countrymen, "of their bigoted attachment to those, dignified by the name of *antients*, in prejudice to the just deserts of the moderns," being thus delivered; and the folly of such conduct, with some agreeable exaggeration, exposed; he sets himself, with a happy mixture of irony and argument, as well becomes the genius and character of the *epistle*, to confute the pretences, and overturn the very *foundations*, on which it rested.

One main support of their folly was taken from an allowed fact; viz. "That the oldest *Greek* writers were incontestably superior to the modern ones." From whence they inferred, that it was but according to nature and the course of experience, to give the like preference to the oldest *Roman* masters.

His confutation of this sophism consists of two parts. *First*, [from line 28 to 32,] he insists on the *evident* absurdity of the opinion he is confuting. There was no reasoning with persons capable of such *extravagant positions*. But, *secondly*, the pretended fact itself, with regard to the Greek learning, was *grossly misunderstood, or perversely applied*. For [from line 32 to 34] it was not true, nor could it be admitted, that the

# 6 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Psallimus, et luctamur Achivis doctius unctis.  
 Si meliora dies, ut vina, poemata reddat;  
 Scire velim, chartis pretium quotus arrogat annus,  
 Scriptor ab hinc annos centum qui decidit, inter  
 Perfectos veteresque referri debet, an inter  
 Vilis atque novos? excludat jurgia finis.  
 Est vetus atque probus centum qui perficit annos.  
 Quid? qui deperit minor uno mense vel anno, 40

## COMMENTARY.

very *oldest* of the Greek writers were the best, but those only, which were old, in comparison of the mere modern Greeks. The so much applauded models of Grecian antiquity were themselves *modern*, in respect of the still *older* and ruder essays of their first writers. It was long discipline and cultivation, the same which had given the Greek *artists* in the Augustan reign a superiority over the Roman, that by degrees established the good taste, and fixed the authority, of the Greek *poets*; from which point it was natural, and even necessary for succeeding, *i. e.* the modern, Greeks to decline. But no consequence lay from hence to the advantage of the Latin poets, in question; who were wholly unfurnished with any previous study of the arts of verse; and whose works could only be compared with the very *oldest*, that is, the rude, forgotten essays of the Greek poetry. So that the fine sense, so closely shut up in this concise couplet, comes out thus: "The modern Greek masters of the *fine arts* are confessedly superior to the modern Roman. The reason is, they have practised them longer, and with more diligence. Just so, the modern Roman



# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 7

Inter quos referendus erit? veteresne poetas,  
 An quos et praesens et postera respuat aetas?  
 Iste quidem veteres inter ponetur honeste,  
 Qui vel mense brevi, vel toto est junior anno.  
 Utor permissio, caudaeque pilos ut equinae 45  
 Paullatim vello; et demo unum, demo et item  
 unum;  
 Dum cadat elusus ratione ruentis acervi,  
 Qui redit in fastos, et virtutem aestimat annis.

## COMMENTARY.

"Roman writers must needs have the advantage of  
 "their *old* ones: who had no knowledge of writing,  
 "as *n art*, or, if they had, took but small care to put  
 "it in practice."

Further, this plea of antiquity is as uncertain in its  
*application*, as it was destitute of all truth and reason  
 in its original *foundation*. For if age only must bear  
 away the palm, what way is there of determining,  
 which writers are *modern*, and which *ancient*? The  
 impossibility of fixing this to the satisfaction of an  
 objector, which is pursued [to line 50] with much  
 agreeable raillery, makes it evident, that the circum-  
 stance of antiquity is absolutely nothing; and that, in  
*estimating the merit* of writers, the real, intrinsic excel-  
 lence of their writings *themselves* is alone to be re-  
 garded.

Thus far the poet's intent was to combat the *general*  
 prejudice of the critic,

*Qui redit in fastos, et virtutem aestimat annis.*

Taking the fact for granted "of his strong prepos-  
 "session for antiquity, *as such*" he would discredit,

# 8 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Miraturque nihil, nisi quod Libitina sacrauit.  
 Ennius et sapiens, et fortis, et alter Homerus, 50  
 Ut critici dicunt, leviter curare videtur  
 Quo promissa cadant, et somnia Pythagorea.  
 Naevius in manibus non est, et mentibus haeret  
 Pene recens? adeo sanctum est vetus omne poema.  
 Ambigitur quotiens, uter utro sit prior; aufert 55  
 Pacuvius docti famam senis, Accius alti:  
 Dicitur Afrani toga convenisse Menandro:  
 Plautus ad exemplar Siculi properare Epicharmi:

## COMMENTARY.

both by raillery and argument, so absurd a conduct, What he gains by this disposition, is to come to the particulars of his charge with more advantage. For the popular contempt of modern composition, sheltering itself under a shew of learned admiration of the *antients*, whose age and reputation had made them truly venerable, and whose genuine merits, in the main, could not be disputed, a direct attack upon their fame, at setting out, without any softening, had disgusted the most *moderate*; whereas this prefatory appeal to common sense, under the cover of general criticism, would even dispose bigotry itself to afford the poet a candid hearing. His accusation then of the public taste comes in here very pertinently; and is delivered, with address [from line 50 to 63] in a particular detail of the judgments passed upon the most celebrated of the old Roman poets, by the generality of the modern critics; where, to win upon their prejudices still further by his generosity and good faith,

he

# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 9

Vincere Caecilius gravitate, Terentius arte.  
 Hos edicit, et hos arto stipata theatro 60  
 Spectat Roma potens; habet hos numeratque  
 poetas  
 Ad nostrum tempus, Livî Scriptoris ab aevo,  
 Interdum volgus rectum videt: est ubi peccat.  
 Si veteres ita miratur laudatque poetas,  
 Ut nihil anteferat, nihil illis comparet; errat: 65

## COMMENTARY.

he scruples not to recount such of their determinations on the merit of ancient writers, as were reasonable and well founded, as well as others, that he deemed less just, and as such intended more immediately to expose.

We see then with what art the poet conducts himself in this attack on the *antients*, and how it served his purpose, by turns, to soften and aggravate the charge. First, "he wanted to lower the reputation of the old poets." This was not to be done by general invective, or an affected dissimulation of their just praise. He admits thep [from line 63 to 66] their reasonable pretensions to *admiration*. It is the *degree* of it alone, to which he objects.

*Si veteres ita miratur laudatque, &c.*

Secondly, "he wanted to draw off their applauses from the ancient to the modern poets." This required the *advantages* of those moderns to be distinctly shewn, or, which comes to the same, the *comparative deficiencies* of the antients to be pointed out. These were not to be dissembled, and are, as he openly insists

10 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Si quaedam nimis antiquæ, si pleraque dure  
Dicere cedit eos, ignave multa fatetur;  
Et sapit, et mecum facit, et Jove judicat æquo.  
Non equidem insector, delendave carmina Laevi  
Essè reor, memini quæ plagosum mihi parvo 70  
Orbilium dictare; sed emendata videri  
Pulchraque, et exactis minimum distantia, miror:  
Inter quæ verbum emicuit si forte decorum,  
Si versus paulo concinnior unus et alter;

COMMENTARY.

*insists [to line 69] obsolete language, rude and barbarous construction, and slovenly composition.*

*Si quaedam nimis ANTIQUE, si pleraque DURE,*

*Dicere cedit eos, IGNAVE multa.*

But what then? an objector replies, these were venial faults; surely; the deficiencies of the times, and not of the men; who, with such incorrectnesses as are here noted, might still possess the greatest talents, and produce the noblest designs. This [from line 69 to 79] is readily admitted. But, in the mean time, one thing was clear, that they were not finished models — *exactis minimum distantia*. Which was the main point in dispute. For the bigot's absurdity lay in this,

*Non veniam antiquis, sed bonorem et præmîa posci.*

Nay, his folly is shewn to have gone still greater lengths. These boasted models of antiquity, with all their imperfections, had occasionally, [line 73, 74] though the instances were indeed rare and thinly scattered, *striking beauties*. These, under the recommendation of age, which, of course, commands our

reve-

# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 11

Injuste totum ducit venitque poema. 75  
 Indignor quicquam reprehendi, non quia crasse  
 Compositum; inlepideve putetur, sed quia nuper:  
 Nec veniam antiquis, sed honorem et praemia  
 posci.

Recte necne crocum floresque perambulet Attae  
 Fabula, si dubitem; clament periisse pudorem 80  
 Cuncti pene patres: ea cum reprehendere coner,  
 Quae gravis Aesopus, quae doctus Roscius egit.

## COMMENTARY.

reverence, might well impose on the judgments of the *generality*, and, standing forth with advantage, as from a shaded and dark ground, would naturally catch the eye and admiration of the more *learned*. Thus much the poet candidly insinuates in excuse of the bigot's *ill judgment*. But, unluckily, he had cut himself off from the benefit of this plea, by avowedly grounding his *admiration*, not merely on the intrinsic excellence, so far as it went, of the ancient poetry itself; but on the advantage of any extraneous circumstance, which but casually stuck to it. The accident of a play's having passed through the mouth, and been graced by the action of a just speaker, was sufficient [from line 79 to 83] (so inexcusable were his prejudices) to attract his wonder, and justify his esteem. In so much that it became an insolence, generally cried out upon, for any one to censure such pieces of the theatre,

*Quae gravis Aesopus, quae doctus Roscius egit.*

This being the case, it was no longer a doubt, whether the affected admiration of antiquity proceeded from

Vel quia nil rectum, nisi quod placuit sibi, ducunt;  
 Vel quia turpe putant parere minoribus, et, quae  
 Inherbi didicere, senes perdenda fateri. 85  
 Jam Saliare Numae carmen qui laudat, et illud  
 Quod mecum ignorat, solus volt scire videri;

## COMMENTARY.

from a deluded judgment only, or a much worse cause. It could plainly be resolved into no other, than the wilful agency of the malignant affections; which, wherever they prevail, corrupt the simple and ingenuous sense of the mind, either, 1. [line 83] *in engendering high conceits of self*, and referring all degrees of excellence to the supposed infallible standard of every man's own judgment; or, 2. [to line 86] *in creating a false shame*, and reluctance in us to be directed by the judgments of others, though *seen* to be more equitable, whenever they are found in opposition to our own rooted and preconceived opinions. The bigotry of *old men* is, especially, for this reason, invincible. They hold themselves upbraided by the sharper sight of their juniors; and regard the adoption of new sentiments, at their years, as so much absolute loss on the side of the dead stock of their old literary possessions. These considerations are generally of such prevalency in grey veteran critics, that [from line 86 to 90] whenever, as in the case before us, they pretend an uncommon zeal for antiquity, and their sagacity piques itself on detecting the superior value of obscure rhapsodists, whom nobody else reads, or is able to understand, we may be sure the secret view of such, is, not the generous defence and patronage



# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 13

Ingeniis non ille favet plaudisque sepultis,  
 Nostra sed impugnat, nos nostraque lividus odit.  
 Quod si tam Graiis novitas invisa fuisset, 90  
 Quam nobis; quid nunc esset vetus? aut quid  
 haberet,  
 Quod legeret terereturque viritum publicus usus?

## COMMENTARY.

patronage of *ancient* wit, but a low malevolent pleasure in decrying the just pretensions of the *modern*.

*Ingeniis non ille favet plaudisque sepultis,*

*Nostra sed impugnat, nos nostraque lividus odit.*

The poet had, now, made appear the unreasonable attachment of his countrymen to the fame of their old writers. He had thoroughly unravelled the sophistical pretences, on which it affected to justify itself; and had even dared to unveil the *secret iniquitous principle*, from which it arose. It was now time to look forward to the *effects* of it; which were, in truth, very baleful; its poisonous influences being of force to corrupt and wither, as it were, in the bud, every rising species of excellence, and fatally to check the very hopes and tendencies of true genius. Nothing can be truer than this remark; which he further enforces, and brings home to his adversaries, by asking a pertinent question, to which it concerned them to make a serious reply. They had magnified, line 28, the perfection of the Greek models. But what [to line 93] if the Greeks had conceived the same aversion to *novelties*, as the Romans? How then could *those* models have ever been furnished to the public use? The question, we see, insinuates what was before

# 14 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Ut primum positis nugari Græciæ bellis  
 Coepit, et in vitium fortuna labier aequa;  
 Nunc athletarum studiis, nunc arsit equorum: 95  
 Marmoris, aut eboris fabros, aut aeris amavit;  
 Suspendit picta vultum mentemque tabella;  
 Nunc tibicinibus, nunc est gavisus tragœdis:  
 Sub nutrice puella velut si luderet infans,

## COMMENTARY.

before affirmed to be the truth of the case; that the unrivalled excellence of the Greek poets proceeded only from long and vigorous exercise, and a painful uninterrupted application to the arts of verse. The liberal spirit of that people led them to countenance every new attempt towards superior literary excellence; and so, by the public favour, their writings, from rude essays, became at length the standard and admiration of succeeding wits. The Romans had treated their adventurers quite otherwise, and the effect was answerable. This is the purport of what to a common eye may look like a *digression* [from line 93 to 108] in which is delineated the very different genius and practice of the two nations. For the Greeks [to line 102] had applied themselves, in the intervals of their leisure from the toils of war, to the cultivation of every species of elegance, whether in *arts*, or *letters*; and loved to cherish the public emulation, by affording a free indulgence to the various and volatile disposition of the times. The activity of these restless spirits was incessantly attempting some new and untried *form* of composition; and, when *that* was brought to a due degree of perfection, it turned, *in good time*, to the cultivation of some *other*.

*Quod*



# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 15

Quod cupide petiit, mature plena reliquit. 100  
Quid placet, aut odio est, quod non mutabile  
credas?

Hoc paces habuere bonae, ventique secundi,  
Romae dulce diu fuit et solenne, reclusa  
Mane domo vigilare, clienti promere jura :  
Scriptos nominibus rectis expendere nummos :

## COMMENTARY.

*Quod cupide petiit, mature plena reliquit.*

So that the very caprice of *humour* [line 101] assisted, in this libertine country, to advance and help forward the public taste. Such was the effect of *peace and opportunity* with them.

*Hoc paces habuere bonae ventique secundi.*

Whereas the *Romans* [to line 108] by a more composed temperament and saturnine complexion had devoted their pains to the pursuit of domestic utilities, and a more dextrous management of the *arts of gain*. The consequence of which was, that when, [to line 117] by the decay of the old frugal spirit, the necessary effect of overflowing plenty and ease, they began, at length, to seek out for the elegancies of life; and a *fit of versifying*, the first of all liberal amusements, that usually seizes an idle people, had come upon them; their ignorance of rules, and want of exercise in the art of writing, rendered them wholly unfit to succeed in it. So that their awkward attempts in poetry were now as disgraceful to their *taste*, as their total disregard of it, before, had been to their *civility*. The root of this mischief was the idolatrous regard paid to their ancient poets: which unluckily, when the public emulation was set a going,

# 16 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Majores audire, minori dicere, per quae  
 Crescere res posset, minui damnosa libido.  
 Mutavit mentem populus levis, et calet uno  
 Scribendi studio: puerique patresque severi  
 Fronde comas vincti coenant, et carmina dictant.  
 Ipse ego, qui nullos me adfirmo scribere versus,  
 Invenior Parthis mendacior; et prius orto  
 Sole vigil, calammum et chartas et scrinia posco.  
 Navem agere ignarus navis timet: abrotonum  
 aegro

Non audet, nisi qui didicit, dare: quod medi-  
 corum est, 115

Promittunt medici: tractant fabrilia fabri:  
 Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim.

## COMMENTARY.

going, not only checked its progress, but gave it a wrong bias; and, instead of helping true genius to outstrip the lame and tardy endeavours of ancient wit, drew it aside into a vicious and unprofitable mimicry of its very imperfections. Whence it had come to pass, that, whereas in other *arts*, the previous knowledge of rules is required to the practice of them, in this of *versifying*, no such qualification was deemed necessary.

*Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim.*

This mischance was *doubly* fatal to the Latin poetry. For the ill success of these blind adventurers had increased the original mischief, by confirming, as it needs must, the superstitious reverence of the old writers; and insensibly brought, as well the art itself,

## EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 17

Hic error tamen et levis haec infania quantas  
 Virtutes habeat, sic collige : vatis avarus  
 Non temere est animus : versus amat, hoc studet  
 unum ;

Detrimenta, fugas fervorum, incendia ridet : 121  
 Non fraudem socio, puerove incogitat ullam  
 Pupillæ : vivit filiquis, et pane secundo :  
 Militiae quanquam piger et malus, utilis urbi ;  
 Si das hoc, parvis quoque rebus magna juvari ;  
 Os tenerum pueri balbumque poëta figurat : 126  
 Torquet ab obscœnis jam nunc sermonibus  
 aurem ;

Mox etiam pectus praeceptis format amicis,  
 Asperitatis et invidiae corrector et irae :

### COMMENTARY.

itself, as the modern professors of it, into disrepute with the discerning public. The vindication of *both*, then, at this critical juncture, was become highly seasonable ; and to this, which was the poet's main purpose, he addresses himself through the remainder of the epistle.

118 to the end. HIC ERROR TAMEN, &c.] Having sufficiently obviated the popular and reigning prejudices against the modern poets, his office of *advocate* for their fame, which he had undertaken, and was now to discharge, in form, required him to set their real merits and pretensions in a just light. He enters therefore immediately on this task. And, in drawing the character of the *true poet*, endeavours to impress the emperor with as advantageous an idea as possible, of the worth and dignity of his calling. And this, not in the fierce insulting tone of a zealot

## 18 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Recte facta refert; orientia tempora notis 130  
 Instruit exemplis; inopem solatur et aegrum.  
 Castis cum pueris ignara puella mariti  
 Disceret unde preces, vatem ni Musa dedisset?  
 Poscit opem chorus, et praesentia numina sentit;  
 Caelestis implorat aquas, docta prece blandus; 135  
 Avertit morbos, metuenda pericula pellit;  
 Inpetrat et pacem, et locupletem frugibus annum:  
 Carmine Di superi placantur, carmine Manes.

## COMMENTARY.

for the *honour of his order*, which to the *great* is always disgusting, and where the occasion is, confessedly, not of the last importance, plainly absurd; but with that unpretending air of insinuation, which good sense, improved by a thorough knowledge of the world, teaches: with that seeming indifference, which disarms prejudice: in a word, with that gracious *smile in his aspect*, which his strong admirer and faint copyer, Persius, so justly noted in him, and which convinces almost without the help of argument; or, to say it more truly, *persuades* where it doth not properly *convince*. In this disposition he sets out on his defence; and yet omits no *particular*, which could any way serve to the real recommendation of *poets*, or which indeed the gravest or warmest of their friends have ever pleaded in their behalf. This defence consists [from line 118 to 139] in bringing into view their many *civil, moral, and religious* virtues. For the *mise*, as the poet contends, (and nothing could be more likely to conciliate the esteem of the politic emperor) administers, in this threefold capacity, to the service of the state.

Bar

## EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 19

Agricolae prisce, fortes, parvoque beati,  
 Condita post frumenta, levantes tempore festo 140  
 Corpus et ipsum animum spe finis dura ferentem,  
 Cum sociis operum pueris et conjuge fida,  
 Tellurem porco, Silvanum lacte piabant,  
 Floribus et vino Genium mentorem brevis aevi.  
 Fescennina per hunc inuenta licentia morem 145  
 Versibus alternis opprobria rustica fudit;  
 Libertasque recurrentis accepta per annos

### COMMENTARY.

But *religion*, which was its *noblest end*, was, besides, the *first object* of poetry. The dramatic muse, in particular, had her birth, and derived her very character, from it. This circumstance then leads him with advantage, to give an historical deduction of the rise and progress of the Latin poetry, from its first rude workings in the days of barbarous superstition, through every successive period of its improvement, down to his own times. Such a view of its descent and gradual reformation, was directly to the poet's purpose. For, having magnified the virtues of his order, as of such importance to society, the question naturally occurred, by what unhappy means it had fallen out, that it was, nevertheless, in such low estimation with the public. The answer is, that the state of the Latin poetry, as yet, was very rude and imperfect: and so the public disregard was occasioned, only, by its not having attained to that degree of perfection, of which its nature was capable. Many reasons had concurred to keep the Latin poetry in this state, which he proceeds to enumerate. The *first and principal* was [from line 139 to 164] the little

C 2
attention.

Lusit amabiliter : donec jam saevus apertam  
 In rabiem coepit verti jocus, et per honestas  
 Ire domos impune minax. doluere cruento 150  
 Dente laceffiti : fuit intactis quoque cura  
 Conditione super communi : quin etiam lex  
 Poenaeque lata, malo quae nollet carmine quem-  
 quam  
 Describi. vertere modum, formidine fustis  
 Ad bene dicendum delectandumque redacti. 155  
 Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artis

## COMMENTARY.

attention paid to critical learning, and the cultivation of a correct and just spirit of composition. Which, again, had arisen from the coarse illiberal disposition of the Latin muse, who had been nurtured and brought up under the roof of rural superstition; and this, by an impure mixture of licentious jollity, had so corrupted her very nature, that it was only by slow degrees, and not till the conquest of Greece had imported arts and learning into Italy, that she began to chastise her manners, and assume a juster and more becoming deportment. And still she was but in the condition of a rustic beauty, when practising her awkward airs, and making her first ungracious essays towards a manner.

*in longum tamen aevum*

*Manferunt, hodieque manent vestigia ruris.*

Her late acquaintance with the Greek models had, indeed, improved her air, and inspired an inclination to emulate their noblest graces. But how successfully, we are given to understand from her unequal attempts in the two sublimer species of their poetry, the TRAGIC, and COMIC DRAMAS.

i. [from



## EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 21

Intulit agresti Latio. sic horridus ille  
 Defluxit numerus Saturnius, et grave virus  
 Munditiae pepulere: sed in longum tamen aevum  
 Manserunt, hodieque manent, vestigia ruris. 160  
 Serus enim Graecis admovit acumina chartis;  
 Et post Punica bella quietus quaerere coepit,  
 Quid Sophocles et Thespis et Aeschylus utile  
 ferrent:  
 Tentavit quoque rem, si digne vertere posset:  
 Et placuit sibi, natura sublimis et acer. 165

### COMMENTARY.

1. [from line 160 to 168.] *The study of the Greek tragedians* had very naturally, and to good purpose, in the infancy of their taste, disposed the Latin writers to *translation*. Here they stuck long; for their tragedy, even in the Augustan age, was little else; and yet they succeeded but indifferently in it. The bold and animated genius of Rome was, it is readily owned, well suited to this work. And for force of colouring, and a truly tragic elevation, the Roman poets came not behind their great originals. But unfortunately their judgment was unformed, and they were too soon satisfied with their own productions. Strength and fire was all they endeavoured after. And with this praise they fate down perfectly contented. The discipline of correction, the curious polishing of art, which had given such a lustre to the Greek tragedians, they knew nothing of; or, to speak their case more truly, they held disgraceful to the high spirit and energy of the Roman genius:

TURPEM PUTAT INSCRIPTIS METUITQUE LITURAM.

22 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Nam spirat tragicum fatis, et feliciter audet;  
Sed turpem putat inscitus metuitque lituram.  
Creditor, ex medio quia res arceffit, habere  
Sudoris minimum; sed habet comoedia tanto  
Plus oneris, quanto veniae minus. aspice, Plautus  
Quo pacto partis tutetur amantis ephebi; 171  
Ut patris attenti, lenonis ut infidiosi:  
Quantus sit Dossennus edacibus in parasitis:  
Quam non adstricto percurrat pulpita focco.  
Gestit enim nummum in loculos demittere;  
post hoc

COMMENTARY.

2. It did not fare better with them [from line 168 to 175] in their attempts to rival *the Greek comedy*. They preposterously set out with the notion of its being easier to execute this drama than the tragic: whereas, to hit its genuine character with exactness, was, in truth, a point of much more difficulty. As the *subject* of comedy was taken from common life, they supposed an ordinary degree of care might suffice to do it justice. No wonder, then, they overlooked, or never came up to, that nice adjustment of the *manners*, that truth and decorum of *character*, wherein the glory of comic painting consists, and which none but the quickest eye can discern, and the steadiest hand execute; and, in the room, amused us with *high colouring*, and *false drawing*; with *extravagant, aggravated portraiture*s; which, neglecting the modest proportion of real life, are the certain arguments of an unpractised pencil, or vicious taste.

What

# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 23

Securus, cadat an recto stet fabula talo. 176

Quem tulit ad scenam ventoso gloria curru,

Exanimat lentus spectator, sedulus inflat.

Sic leve, sic parvum est, animum quod laudis  
avarum

Subruit ac reficit. valeat res ludicra, si me 180

Palma negata macrum, donata reducit opimum.

Saepe, etiam audacem, fugat hoc terretque poetam;

## COMMENTARY.

What contributed to this prostitution of the comic muse, was [to line 177] the seducement of that corruptress of all virtue, *the love of money*; which had thoroughly infected the Roman wits, and was, in fact, the sole object of their pains. Hence, provided they could but catch the applauses of the people, to which the pleasantry of the comic scene more especially aspires, and so secure a good round *price* from the magistrates, whose office it was to furnish this kind of entertainment, they became indifferent to every nobler view and honest purpose. In particular [to line 182] they so little considered *fame and the praise of good writing*, that they made it the ordinary topic of their ridicule; representing it as the mere illusion of vanity, and the pitiable infirmity of *lean-witted* minds, to be caught by the lure of so empty and unsubstantial a benefit.

Though, were any one, in defiance of public ridicule, so *daring* (as there is no occasion in life, which calls for, or demonstrates a greater firmness) as frankly to avow and submit himself to this generous *motive*, the surest inspirer of every virtuous excellence, yet one thing remained to check and weaken the vigour of his emulation. This [from line 182 to 187]

24 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Quod numero plures, virtute et honore minores,  
Indocti, stolidique, et depugnare parati 184

Si discordet eques, media inter carmina poscunt  
Aut ursum aut pugiles: his nam plebecula gaudet.  
Verum equiti quoque jam migravit ab aure  
voluptas

Omnis, ad ingratos oculos, et gaudia vana.

Quatuor aut pluris aulaea premuntur in horas;

COMMENTARY.

was the folly and ill taste of the undiscerning multitude; who, in all countries, have a great share in determining the fate and character of scenical representations, but, from the popular constitution of the government, were, at Rome, of the first consequence. These, by their rude clamours, and the authority of their numbers, were enough to dishearten the most intrepid genius; when, after all his endeavours to reap the glory of an absolute work, the action was almost sure to be mangled and broken in upon by the shews of *wild beasts and gladiators*; those *dear delights*, which the Romans, it seems, prized much above the highest pleasures of the drama.

Nay, the poet's case was still more desperate. For it was not the untutored rabble, as in other countries, that gave a countenance to these illiberal sports: even *rank and quality*, at Rome, debased itself in shewing the fiercest passion for these *shews*, and was as ready, as abject commonalty itself, to prefer the uninstrueting pleasures of the *eye* to those of the *ear*.

EQUITI quoque jam migravit ab aure voluptas  
Omnis ad ingratos oculos et gaudia vana.

And,

# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 25

Dum fugiant equitum turmae, peditumque  
catervae :

Mox trahitur manibus regum fortuna retortis :

Effeda festinant, pilenta, petorrita, naves :

Captivum portatur ebur, captiva Corinthus.

Si foret in terris, rideret Democritus ; seu

Diversum confusa genus panthera camelo, 195

Sive elephas albus volgi converterit ora :

## COMMENTARY.

And, because this barbarity of taste had contributed more than any thing else to deprave the poetry of the stage, and discourage its best masters from studying its perfection, what follows [from line 189 to 207] is intended, in all the keenness of raillery, to satirize this madness. It afforded an ample field for the poet's ridicule. For, besides the riotous disorders of their theatre, the senseless admiration of *pomp and spectacle* in their plays had so enchanted his countrymen, that the very decorations of the scene, the tricks and trappings of the comedians, were surer to catch the applauses of the gaping multitude, than any regard to the justness of the poet's design, or the beauty of his execution.

Here the poet should naturally have concluded his *defence of the dramatic writers*; having alledged every thing in their favour, that could be urged, plausibly, from *the state of the Roman stage: the genius of the people: and the several prevailing practices of ill taste*, which had brought them into disrepute with the best judges. But finding himself obliged, in the course of this vindication of the modern *stage-poets*, to censure, as sharply as their very enemies, the vices and defects

## 26 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Spectaret populum ludis attentius ipsis,  
 Ut sibi præbentem mimo spectacula plura :  
 Scriptores autem narrare putaret afello  
 Fabellam furdo. nam quæ pervincere voces 200  
 Evaluere sonum, referunt quem nostra theatra ?  
 Garganum mugire putes nemus, aut mare Tuscum.  
 Tanto cum strepitu ludi spectantur, et artes,  
 Divitiæque peregrinae : quibus oblitus actor  
 Cum stetit in scena, concurrat dextera laevæ : 205  
 Dixit adhuc aliquid ? nil sane. quid placet ergo ?  
 Lana Tarentino violas imitata veneno.  
 Ac ne forte putes me, quæ facere ipse recusem,

## COMMENTARY.

defects of their *poetry*; and fearing lest this severity on a sort of writing, to which himself had never pretended, might be misinterpreted as the effect of envy only, and a malignant disposition towards the art itself, under cover of pleading for its *professors*, he therefore frankly avows [from line 208 to 214] his preference of the *dramatic*, to every other species of poetry; declaring the sovereignty of its pathos over the *affections*, and the magic of its illusive scenery on the *imagination*, to be the highest argument of poetic excellence, the last and noblest exercise of the human genius.

One thing still remained. He had taken upon himself to apologize for the Roman poets in *general*; as may be seen from the large terms, in which he proposes his subject.

*Hic error tamen et levis hæc insania quantas  
 Virtutes habeat, sic collige.*

But



# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 27

Cum recte tractent alii, laudare maligne :  
 Ille per extantum funem mihi posse videtur 210  
 Ire poeta ; meum qui pectus inaniter angit,  
 Inritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus inplet,  
 Ut magus ; et modo me Thebis, modo ponit  
 Athenis.

Verum age, et his, qui se lectori credere malunt,  
 Quam spectatoris fastidia ferre superbi, 215  
 Curam impende brevem : si munus Apolline  
 dignum

Vis complere libris ; et vatibus addere calcar,  
 Ut studio majore petant Helicon virentem.

## COMMENTARY.

But, after a general encomium on the *office* itself, he confines his defence to the *writers for the stage* only. In conclusion then, he was constrained, by the very purpose of his address, to say a word or two in behalf of the remainder of this neglected family ; of those, who, as the poet expresses it, had *rather trust to the equity of the closet, than subject themselves to the caprice and insolence of the theatre.*

Now, as before, in asserting the honour of the stage-poets, he every-where supposes the emperor's *disgust* to have sprung from the wrong conduct of the poets themselves, and then extenuates the blame of such *conduct*, by considering, still further, the *causes* which gave rise to it ; so he prudently observes the like method here. The politeness of his address concedes to Augustus, the just *offence* he had taken to his brother poets ; whose honour, however, he contrives to save, by softening the *occasions* of it. This is the drift of what follows [from line 214 to 229] where  
 he

Multa quidem nobis facimus mala saepe poëtae,  
 (Ut vineta egomet caedam mea) cum tibi librum  
 Sollicito damus, aut fesso : cum laedimur, unum  
 Si quis amicorum est ausus reprehendere versum :  
 Cum loca jam recitata revolvimus inrevocati :  
 Cum lamentamur non adparere labores  
 Nostros, et tenui deducta poemata filo :

## COMMENTARY.

he pleasantly recounts the several foibles and indiscretions of the muse ; but in a way, that could only dispose the emperor to smile at, or at most to pity, her infirmities, not provoke his serious censure and disesteem. They amount, on the whole, but to certain idleneſſes of *vanity*, the almost inseparable attendants of *wit*, as well as *beauty* ; and may be forgiven in *each*, as implying a strong desire of pleasing, or rather as *qualifying* both to please. One of the most exceptionable of these *vanities* was a fond persuasion, too readily taken up by men of parts and genius, that *preferment is the constant pay of merit* ; and that, from the moment their talents become known to the public, distinction and advancement are sure to follow. They believed, in short, they had only to convince the world of their superior abilities, to deserve the favour and countenance of their prince. But fond and presumptuous as these hopes are (continues the poet [from line 229 to 244] with all the insinuation of a courtier, and yet with a becoming sense of the dignity of his own character) it may deserve a serious consideration, what poets are fit to be entrusted with the glory of princes ; what *ministers* are worth retain-

# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 29

Cum speramus eo rem venturam, ut, simul atque  
 Carmina rescieris nos fingere, commodus ultro  
 Arceffas, et egere vetes, et scribere cogas.  
 Sed tamen est operae pretium cognoscere, qualis  
 Aedituos habeat belli spectata domique 230  
 Virtus, indigno non committenda poetae.  
 Gratus Alexandro regi Magno fuit ille

## COMMENTARY.

ing in the service of an illustrious VIRTUE, whose honours demand to be solemnized with a religious reverence, and should not be left to the profanation of vile, unhallowed hands. And, to support the authority of this remonstrance, he alledges the example of a great monarch, who had dishonoured himself by a neglect of this care; of ALEXANDER THE GREAT, who, when master of the world, as Augustus now was, perceived, indeed, the importance of gaining a poet to his service; but unluckily chose so ill, that his encomiums (as must ever be the case with a vile panegyrist) but tarnished the native splendor of those virtues, which his office required him to present, in their fullest and fairest glory, to the admiration of the world. In his appointment of *artists*, whose skill is, also, highly serviceable to the fame of princes, he shewed a truer judgment. For he suffered none but an APELLES and a LYSIPPUS to counterfeit the form and fashion of his *person*. But his *taste*, which was thus exact, and even *subtile* in what concerned the mechanic execution of the *fine-arts*, took up with a CHOERILUS, to transmit an image of his *mind* to future ages; so grossly undiscerning was he in works of poetry, and the liberal *offerings of the muse*!

And

## 30 Q. HORATII FLACCI

Choerilos, incultis qui versibus et male natis  
 Rettulit acceptos, regale nomisma, Philippos.  
 Sed veluti tractata notam labemque remittunt 235  
 Atramenta, fere scriptores carmine foedo  
 Splendida facta linunt. idem rex ille, poema  
 Qui tam ridiculum tam care prodigus emit,  
 Edicto vetuit; ne quis se, praeter Apellen  
 Pingeret, aut alius Lysippo cuderet aera 240  
 Fortis Alexandri voltum simulantia. quod si  
 Judicium subtile videndis artibus illud  
 Ad libros et ad haec Musarum dona vocares;  
 Boeotum in crasso jurares aëre natum.  
 At neque dedecorant tua de se iudicia, atque 245

## COMMENTARY.

And thus the poet makes a double use of the ill judgment of this imperial critic. For nothing could better demonstrate the importance of *poetry* to the honour of *greatness*, than that this illustrious conqueror, without any particular knowledge or discernment in the *art* itself, should think himself concerned to court its assistance. And, then, what could be more likely to engage the emperor's further protection and love of *poetry*, than the insinuation (which is made with infinite address) that, as he honoured it equally, so he understood its merits much better? For [from line 245 to 248, where, by a beautiful concurrence, the flattery of his prince falls in with the honest purpose of doing justice to the memory of his friends] it was not the same unintelligent liberality, which had cherished Choerilus, that poured the full stream of Caesar's bounty

# EPISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM. 31

Munera, quae multa dantis cum laude tulerunt  
 Dilecti tibi Virgilius Variusque poetae :  
 Nec magis expressi voltus per aënea signa,  
 Quam per vatis opus mores animique virorum  
 Clarorum adparent. nec sermones ego mallet 250  
 Repentis per humum, quam res componere gestas,  
 Terrarumque situs, et flumina dicere, et arcis  
 Montibus impositas, et barbara regna, tuisque  
 Auspiciis totum confecta duella per orbem,  
 Claustraque custodem pacis cohibentia Janum,  
 Et formidatam Parthis, te principe, Romam : 256  
 Si quantum cuperem, possem quoque. sed neque  
 parvum

## COMMENTARY.

bounty on such persons, as **VARIUS** and **VIRGIL**. And, as if the spirit of these inimitable poets had, at once, seized him, he breaks away in a bolder run of verse [from line 248 to 250] *to sing the triumphs of an art*, which expressed the *manners and the mind* in fuller and more durable *relief*, than painting, or even sculpture, had ever been able to give to the external *figure*: And [from line 250 to the end] *apologizes for himself* in adopting the humbler epistolary *species*, when a warmth of inclination and the unrivaled glories of his prince were continually urging him on to the nobler, *encomiastic* poetry. His excuse, in brief, is taken from the conscious inferiority of his genius, and a tenderness for the fame of the emperor, which is never more disserved than by the officious sedulity of bad poets to do it honour. And with this apology, one while condescending to the  
 unfeigned

### 32. Q. HORATII FLACCI

Carmen majestas recipit tua : nec meus audet  
 Rem tentare pudor, quam vires ferre recusent.  
 Sedulitas autem stulte, quem diligit, arguet ; 260  
 Praecipue cum se numeris commendat et arte.  
 Discit enim citius, meminitque libentius illud  
 Quod quis deridet, quam quod probat et veneratur.  
 Nil moror officium, quod me gravat : ac neque ficto  
 In pejus voltu proponi cereus usquam, 265  
 Nec prave factis decorari versibus opto :  
 Ne rubeam pingui donatus munere, et una  
 Cum scriptore meo capsâ porrectus operta,  
 Deferar in vicum vendentem thus et odores,  
 Et piper, et quicquid chartis amicitur ineptis. 270

#### COMMENTARY.

unfeigned humility of a person, sensible of the *kind and measure* of his abilities, and then, again, sustaining itself by a freedom, and even familiarity, which real merit knows, on certain occasions, to take without offence, the epistle concludes.

If the general opinion may be trusted, this, which was one of the *last*, is also among the *noblest*, of the great poet's compositions. Perhaps, the reader, who considers it in the plain and simple order, to which the foregoing analysis hath reduced it, may satisfy himself, that this praise hath not been undeservedly bestowed.

#### NOTES



N O T E S

ON THE

EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS.

VOL. II.

D



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N O T E S

ON THE

EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS.

**E**PISTOLA AD AUGUSTUM.] The epistle to AUGUSTUS is an apology for the Roman poets. The epistle to the Pisos, a criticism on their poetry. This to Augustus may be therefore considered as a sequel of *that* to the Pisos; and which could not well be omitted; for the author's design of forwarding the study and improvement of the *art of poetry* required him to bespeak the public favour to its *professors*.

But as, *there*, in correcting the abuses of their poetry, he mixes, occasionally, some encomiums on poets; so, *here*, in pleading the cause of the poets, we find him interweaving instructions on poetry. Which was but according to the writer's *occasions* in each work. For the freedom of his censure on the *art of poetry* was to be softened by some expressions of his good-will towards the poets; and this apology for their *fame* had been too direct and unmanaged, but for the qualify-

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ing

ing appearance of its intending the further benefit of the *art*. The coincidence, then, of the same general *method*, as well as *design*, in the two epistles, made it not improper to give them together, and on the same footing, to the public. Though both the *subject* and *method* of this last are so clear as to make a continued commentary upon it much less wanted.

4. SI LONGO SERMONE MORER TUA TEMPORA, CAESAR.] The poet is thought to begin with apologizing for the *shortness of this epistle*. And yet it is one of the longest he ever wrote. How is this inconsistency to be reconciled? “Horace parle peut être ainsi pour ne pas rebuter Auguste, et pour lui faire connaître, qu’il auroit fait une lettre, beaucoup plus longue, s’il avoit suivi son inclination.” This is the best account of the matter we have, hitherto, been able to come at. But the familiar civility of such a compliment, as M. Dacier supposes, though it might be well enough to an *equal*, or, if dressed up in spruce phrases, might make a figure in the *lettres familières et galantes* of his own nation; yet is surely of a cast entirely foreign to the Roman gravity, more especially in an address to the emperor of the world. Mr. Pope, perceiving the absurdity of the common interpretation, seems to have read the lines

*interro-*

# EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 37

*interrogatively*; which, though it saves the sense, and suits the purpose of the English poet very well, yet neither agrees with the language nor serious air of the original. The case, I believe, was this. The genius of epistolary writing demands, that the subject-matter be not abruptly delivered, or hastily obtruded on the person addressed; but, as the law of decorum prescribes (for the rule holds in *writing*, as in *conversation*), be gradually and respectfully introduced to him. This obtains more particularly in applications to the *great*, and on important subjects. But, now, the poet, being to address his prince on a point of no small delicacy, and on which he foresaw he should have occasion to hold him pretty long, prudently contrives to get, as soon as possible, into his subject; and, to that end, hath the art to convert the very transgression of this rule into the justest and most beautiful compliment.

That cautious preparation, which is ordinarily requisite in our approaches to *greatness*, had been, the poet observes, in the present case, highly unseasonable, as the business and interests of the empire must, in the mean time, have stood still and been suspended. By *sermone* then we are to understand, not the *body* of the epistle, but the proeme or *introduction* only. The *body*, as of public concern, might be allowed to engage, at full length, the emperor's attention. But the

*introduction*, consisting of *ceremonial* only, the *common good* required him to shorten as much as possible. It was no time for using an insignificant preamble, or, in our English phrase, of making *long speeches*. The reason, too, is founded, not merely in the elevated rank of the emperor, but in the peculiar diligence and sollicitude, with which, history tells us, he endeavoured to promote, by various ways, the interests of his country. So that the compliment is as *just* as it is *polite*. It may be further observed, that *sermo* is used in Horace, to signify the ordinary style of conversation. [See Sat. i. 3. 65. and iv. 42.] and therefore not improperly denotes the familiarity of the epistolary address, which, in its easy expression, so nearly approaches to it.

13. URIT ENIM FULGORE SUO, QUI PRAE-  
GRAVAT ARTES INFRA SE POSITAS : EXTINC-  
TUS AMABITUR IDEM.] The poet, we may  
suppose, spoke this from experience. And so  
might another of later date when he complained :

Unhappy Wit, like most mistaken things,  
Atones not for that envy which it brings.

*Essay on Crit.* ver. 494.

Unless it be thought, that, as this was said by  
him very early in life, it might rather pass for a  
prediction of his future fortunes. Be this as it  
will,



## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 39

will, the sufferings, which *unhappy wit* is conceived to bring on itself from the *envy*, it excites, are, I am apt to think, somewhat aggravated; at least if one may judge from the effects it had on this *complainant*. That which would be likely to afflict him most, was the *envy* of his friends. But the generosity of these deserves to be recorded. The *wits* took no offence at his fame, till they found it eclipse their *own*: And his *philosopher and guide*, it is well known, stuck close to him, till another and brighter star had gotten the ascendant. Or, supposing there might be some malice in the case, it is plain there was little mischief. And for this little the poet's creed provides an ample recompence. **EXTINCTUS AMABITUR IDEM**: not, we may be sure, by *those* he most improved, enlightened, and obliged; but by late impartial posterity; and by **ONE** at least of his surviving friends, who generously took upon him the patronage of his fame, and who inherits his genius and his virtues.

14. **EXTINCTUS AMABITUR IDEM.**] *Envy*, says a discerning antient, *is the vice of those, who are too weak to contend, and too proud to submit: vitium eorum, qui nec cedere volunt, nec possunt contendere* [a]. Which, while it sufficiently exposes the folly and malignity of this hateful

[a] Quintilian, lib. xi. c. i.

D 4

passion,

passion, secures the honour of human nature; as implying at the same time, that its worst corruptions are not without a mixture of generosity in them. For this false pride in *refusing to submit*, though absurd and mischievous enough, when unsupported by all *ability to contend*, yet discovers such a sense of superior excellence, as shews, how difficult it is for human nature to divest itself of all virtue. Accordingly, when the too powerful *splendor* is withdrawn, our natural veneration of it takes place: *Extinctus amabitur idem*. This is the true exposition of the poet's sentiment; which therefore appears just the reverse of what his French interpreter would fix upon him. "La justice, que nous rendons aux grands hommes après leur mort, ne vient pas de l'AMOUR, que nous avons pour leur *vertu*, mais de la HAINE, dont notre cœur est rempli pour ceux, qui ont pris leur PLACE." An observation, which only becomes the misanthropy of an old cynic virtue, or the selfishness of a modern system of ethics.

15. PRAESENTI TIBI MATUROS, &c. to line 18.] We are not to wonder at this and the like extravagances of adulation in the Augustan poets. They had ample authority for what they did of this sort. We know, that altars were erected to the emperor by the command of the senate;  
and

## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 41

and that he was publickly invoked, as an established, tutelary divinity. But the seeds of the corruption had been sown much earlier. For we find it sprung up, or rather (as of all the ill weeds, which the teeming soil of human depravity throws forth, none is more thriving and grows faster than this of *flattery*) flourishing at its height, in the tyranny of J. CAESAR. Balbus, in a letter to Cicero, [Ep. ad Att. l. ix.] *swears by the health and safety of Caesar: ita incolumi Caesare, moriar.* And Dio tells us [l. xlv.] that it was, by the express injunction of the senate, decreed, even in Caesar's life-time, that the Romans should bind themselves by this oath. The senate also, as we learn from the same writer, [l. xliii.] upon receiving the news of his defeat of Pompey's sons, caused his statue to be set up, in the temple of Romulus, with this inscription, DEO INVICTO [b].

It is true, these and still greater honours had been long paid to the Roman governors in their

[b] *Θεῷ ἀνικτῷ ἐπιγνώσαντες.* Though, to complete the farce, it was with the greatest shyness and reluctance, that the humility of these lords of the universe could permit itself to accept the ensigns of deity, as the court-historians of those times are forward to inform us. An affectation, which was thought to fit so well upon them, that we find it afterwards practised, in the absurdest and most impudent manner, by the worst of their successors.

provinces,

provinces, by the *abject, slavish Asiatics*. And this, no doubt, facilitated the admission of such idolatries into the capital [c]. But that a people, from the highest notions of an independent republican equality, could so soon be brought to this prostrate adoration of their first *lord*, is perfectly amazing! In this, they shewed themselves ripe for servitude. Nothing could keep them out of the hands of a master. And one can scarcely read such accounts as these, without condemning the vain efforts of dying patriotism, which laboured so fruitlessly, may one not almost say, so weakly? to protract the liberty of such a people. Who can, after this, wonder at the incense, offered up by a few court-poets? The adulation of Virgil, which has given so much offence, and of Horace, who keeps pace with him, was, we see, but the authorized language of the times; presented indeed with address, but without the heightenings and privileged licence of their profession. For, to their credit, it must be owned, that, though in the office of *poets*, they were to comply with the popular voice, and echo it back to the ears of sovereignty; yet, as *men*, they had too much good sense, and too scrupulous a regard to the

[c] See a learned and accurate dissertation on the subject in HIST. DE L'ACAD. DES INSCR. &c. tom. i.

dignity

## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 43

dignity of their characters, to exaggerate and go beyond it.

It should, in all reason, surprize and disgust us still more, that modern writers have not always shewn themselves so discrete. The grave and learned LIPSIVS was not ashamed, even without the convenient pretext of popular flattery, or poetic *colouring*, in so many words, to make a god of his patron: who, though neither king, nor pope, was yet the next best material for this manufacture, an archbishop. For, though the critic knew, that it was *not every wood that will make a Mercury*, yet nobody would dispute the fitness of that, which grew so near the altar. In plain words, I am speaking of an archbishop of MECHLIN, whom, after a deal of fullsome compliment (which was the vice of the man), he exalts at last, with a pagan complaisance, into the order of deities. “Ad hæc,” says he, “*erga omnes humanitas et facilitas me faciunt, ut omnes te non tanquam hominem aliquem de nostro coetu, sed tanquam DEUM QUENDAM DE COELO DELAPSUM INTUEANTUR ET ADMIRENTUR.*”

16. JURANDASQUE TUUM PER NUMEN PONIMUS ARAS.] On this idea of the APOTHEOSIS, which was the usual mode of flattery in the Augustan age, but, as having the countenance of

of public authority, sometimes inartificially enough employed, Virgil hath projected one of the noblest allegories in ancient poetry, and at the same time hath given to it all the force of *just* compliment, the *occasion* itself allowed. *Each* of these excellencies was to be expected from his talents. For, as his genius led him to the *sublime*; so his exquisite judgment would instruct him to palliate this bold fiction, and qualify, as much as possible, the shocking adulation, implied in it. So singular a beauty deserves to be shewn at large.

The *third* GEORGIC sets out with an apology for the low and simple argument of that work, which, yet, the poet esteemed, for its novelty, preferable to the sublimer, but trite, themes of the Greek writers. Not but he intended, on some future occasion, to adorn a nobler subject. This was the great plan of the *Aeneis*, which he now *prefigures* and unfolds at large. For, taking advantage of the noblest privilege of his art, he breaks away, in a fit of *prophetic* enthusiasm, to foretel his successes in this projected enterprize, and, under the imagery of the ancient *triumph*, which comprehends, or suggests to the imagination, whatever is most august in human affairs, to delineate the future glories of this ambitious design. The whole conception, as we shall see, is of the utmost grandeur and magni-



## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 45

magnificence; though, according to the usual management of the poet (which, as not being apprehended by his critics, hath furnished occasion, even to the best of them, to charge him with a want of the *sublime*) he hath contrived to soften and *familiarize* its appearance to the reader, by the artful manner in which it is introduced. It stands thus :

*tentanda via est, qua me quoque possim  
Tollere humo, VICTORQUE virum volitare per ora.*

This idea of *victory*, thus casually dropped, he makes the basis of his imagery; which, by means of this gradual preparation, offers itself easily to the apprehension, though it thereby loses, as the poet designed it should, much of that broad *glare*, in which writers of less judgment love to shew their ideas, as tending to set the common reader at a gaze. The allegory then proceeds :

*Primus ego patriam mecum (modo vita superfit)  
Aonio rediens deducam vertice Musas.*

The projected conquest was no less than that of all the *Grecian Musas* at once; whom, to carry on the decorum of the allegory, he threatens,  
1. to force from their high and advantageous situation on the summit of the *Aonian mount*; and, 2. bring *captive* with him into Italy: the former circumstance intimating to us the difficulty

faculty and danger of the enterprize; and the latter, his complete execution of it.

The *palmy*, triumphal entry, which was usual to victors on their return from foreign successes, follows:

*Primus Idumaeas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas.*

But ancient conquerors did not hold it sufficient to reap this transient fruit of their labours. They were ambitious to consecrate their glory to immortality, by a *temple*, or other public monument, which was to be built out of the spoils of the conquered cities or countries. This, the reader sees, is suitable to the idea of the great work proposed; which was, out of the old remains of Grecian art, to compose a *new* one, that should comprize the virtues of them all: as, in fact, the Aeneid is known to unite in itself whatever is most excellent, not in Homer only, but, universally, in the wits of Greece. The everlasting monument of the *marble* temple is then reared:

*Et viridi in campo templum de MARMORE ponam.*

And, because ancient superstition usually preferred, for these purposes, the banks of *rivers* to other situations, therefore the poet, in beautiful allusion to the site of some of the most celebrated pagan temples, builds *his* on the MINCIUS. We  
see

## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 47

see with what a scrupulous propriety the allusion is carried on :

*Propter aquam, tardis ingens ubi flexibus errat  
MINCIUS, et tenera praetexit arundine ripas.*

Next, this temple was to be dedicated, as a monument of the victor's *piety*, as well as glory, to some propitious, tutelary deity, under whose auspices the great adventure had been atchieved. The *dedication* is then made to the poet's *divinity*, Augustus :

*In medio mihi CAESAR erit, templumque tenebit.*

TEMPLUM TENEBIT. The expression is emphatical ; as intimating to us, and prefiguring the secret purpose of the Aeneïs, which was, in the person of Aeneas, to shadow forth and consecrate the character of Augustus. His divinity was to fill and *occupy* that great work. And the ample circuit of the epic plan was projected only, as a more awful enclosure of that august presence, which was to *inhabit* and solemnize the vast round of this poetic building.

And now the wonderful address of the poet's artifice appears. The mad servility of his country had *deified* the emperor in good earnest : and his brother poets made no scruple to *worship* in his temples, and to come before him with handfuls of *real* incense, smoking from the altars. But the sobriety of Virgil's adoration was of  
another

another cast. He seizes this circumstance only to *embody* a poetical fiction; which, on the supposition of an actual *deification*, hath all the force of compliment, which the *fact* implies, and yet, as presented through the chaste veil of allegory, eludes the offence, which the *naked* recital must needs have given to sober and reasonable men. Had the emperor's *popular* divinity been flatly acknowledged and adored; the praise, even under Virgil's management, had been insufferable for its extravagance; and, without some support for his poetical *numen* to rest upon, the figure had been more forced and strained, than the rules of just writing allow. As it is, the historical truth of his *apotheosis* authorizes and supports the *fiction*; and the fiction, in its turn, serves to refine and palliate the *history*.

The Aeneïs being, by the poet's improvement of this circumstance, thus naturally predicted under the image of a *temple*, we may expect to find a close and studied analogy betwixt them. The great, component parts of the *one* will, no doubt, be made, very faithfully, to represent and adumbrate those of the *other*. This hath been executed with great art and diligence.

1. The *temple*, we observed, was erected on the banks of a river. This site was not only proper, for the reason already mentioned, but

## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 49

also, for the further convenience of instituting *public games*, the ordinary attendants of the *consecration* of temples. These were generally, as in the case of the Olympic, and others, celebrated on the banks of rivers.

*Illi victor ego, et Tyrio conspectus in ostro,  
Centum quadrijugos agitabo ad flumina currus.  
Cuncta mihi, Alpheum linquens lucosque Molorchi,  
Curfibus et crudo decernet Graecia caestu.*

To see the propriety of the *figure* in this place, the reader needs only be reminded of the *book of games* in the *Aeneid*, which was purposely introduced in honour of the emperor, and not, as is commonly thought, for a mere trial of skill between the poet and his master. The emperor was passionately fond of these sports, and was even the author, or restorer, of *one* of them. It is not to be doubted, that he alludes also to the *quinquennial games*, actually celebrated, in honour of his temples, through many parts of the empire. And this the poet undertakes in the *civil office* of VICTOR.

2. What follows is in the *religious office* of PRIEST. For it is to be noted, that, in assuming this double character, which the decorum of the solemnities, here recounted, prescribed, the poet has an eye to the *political* design of the *Aeneis*, which was to do honour to Caesar, in

either capacity of a *civil* and *religious* personage; both being essential to the idea of the PERFECT LEGISLATOR, whose office and character (as an eminent critic hath lately shewn us [d]), it was his purpose, in this immortal work, to adorn and recommend. The account of his *sacerdotal functions* is delivered in these words:

*Ipse caput tonsae foliis ornatus olivae*

*Dona feram. Jam nunc solemnes ducere pompas*

*Ad delubra juvat, caesosque videre juvencos;*

*Vel scena ut versis discedat frontibus, utque*

*Purpurea intexti tollant aulaea Britanni.*

The imagery in this place cannot be understood, without reflecting on the customary form and disposition of the pagan temples. DELUBRUM, or DELUBRA, for either *number* is used indifferently, denotes the shrine, or sanctuary, wherein the statue of the presiding god was placed. This was in the center of the building. Exactly before the *delubrum*, and at no great distance from it, was the ALTAR. Further, the shrine, or *delubrum*, was inclosed and shut up on all sides by *doors* of curious carved work, and ductile *veils*, embellished by the rich embroidery of *flowers*, *animals*, or *human figures*. This being observed, the progress of the imagery before us will be this. The procession

[d] DIV. LEG. vol. i. B. ii. S. 4.



# EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 51

*ad delubra*, or shrine : the sacrifice on the *altars*, erected before it : and, lastly, the painted, or rather wrought *scenery* of the purple *veils*, inclosing the image, which were ornamented, and seemed to be sustained, or held up by the figures of *inwoven Britons*. The meaning of all which is, that the poet would proceed to the celebration of Caesar's praise in all the gradual, solemn preparation of poetic pomp : that he would render the most grateful *offerings* to his divinity in those occasional *episodes*, which he should consecrate to his more immediate honour : and, finally, that he would provide the richest texture of his fancy, for a covering to that admired *image* of his virtues, which was to make the sovereign pride and glory of his poem. The choice of the *inwoven Britons*, for the support of his *veil*, is well accounted for by those who tell us, that Augustus was proud to have a number of these to serve about him in quality of slaves.

The ornaments of the *DOORS* of this *delubrum*, on which the sculptor used to lavish all the riches of his *art*, are next delineated.

*In foribus pugnam ex auro solidoque elephanto  
Gangaridum faciam, victorisque arma Quirini;  
Atque hic undantem bello, magnumque fluentem  
Nilum, ac navali surgentes aere columnas.  
Addam urbes Asiae domitas, pulsumque Niphatem,  
Fidentemque fugâ Parthum versisque sagittis;*

*Et duo rapta manu diverso ex hoste trophaea,  
Bisque triumphatas utroque ex littore gentes.*

Here the covering of the *figure* is too thin to hide the *literal* meaning from the commonest reader, who sees, that the several triumphs of Caesar, here recorded in *sculpture*, are those, which the poet hath taken most pains to *finish*, and hath occasionally inserted, as it were, in *miniature*, in several places of his *poem*. Let him only turn to the prophetic speech of Anchises's shade in the v<sup>r</sup><sup>th</sup>, and to the description of the shield in the viii<sup>th</sup> book.

Hitherto we have contemplated the decorations of the *shrine*, i. e. such as bear a more direct and immediate reference to the honour of Caesar. We are now presented with a view of the remoter, surrounding ornaments of the temple. These are the illustrious Trojan chiefs, whose story was to furnish the materials, or, more properly, to form the body and *case*, as it were, of his august structure. They are also connected with the idol deity of the place by the closest ties of relationship, the Julian family affecting to derive its pedigree from this proud original. The poet then, in his arrangement of these additional figures, with admirable judgment, completes and rounds the entire fiction.

*Stabunt*

# EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 53

*Stabunt et Parii lapides, spirantia signa,  
Assaraci proles, demissaeque ab Jove gentis  
Nomina: Trosq; parens et Trojae Cynthia auctor.*

Nothing now remains but for *fame* to eternize the glories of what the great architect had, at the expence of so much art and labour, completed; which is predicted in the highest sublime of ancient poetry, under the idea of ENVY, whom the poet personalizes, shuddering at the view of such transcendent perfection; and tasting, beforehand, the pains of a remediless vexation, strongly pictured in the image of the worst, infernal tortures.

*INVIDIA infelix furias amnemque severum  
Cocyti metuet, tortosque Ixionis angues,  
Immanemque rotam, et non exuperabile saxum.*

Thus have I presumed, but with a religious awe, to inspect and declare the mysteries of this ideal temple. The attempt after all might have been censured, as prophane, if the great *Mystagogue* himself, or somebody for him [e], had

[e] In these lines,

*Mox tamen ardentes accingar dicere pugnas  
Caesaris, et nomen famâ tot ferre per annos,  
Titboni primâ quot abest ab origine Caesar.*

Which I suspect not to have been from the hand of Virgil. And,

1. On account of some peculiarities in the expression.
1. *Accingar* is of frequent use in the best authors,

not given us the undoubted key to it. Under this encouragement, I could not withstand the

to denote a readiness and resolution to do any thing; but as joined with an infinitive mood, *accingar dicere*, I do not remember to have ever seen it. It is often used by Virgil; but, if the several places be consulted, it will always be found with an accusative and preposition, expressed, or understood, as *magicas accingier artes*, or with an accusative and dative, as *accingere se praedae*, or, lastly, with an ablative, expressing the instrument, as *accingor ferro*. LA CERDA, in his notes upon the place, seemed sensible of the objection, and therefore wrote, *Graeca locutio*: the common, but paltry, shift of learned critics, when they determine, at any rate, to support an ancient reading.

2. *Ardentes pugnas*, burning battles, sounds well enough to a modern ear; but I much doubt, if it would have passed in the times of Virgil. At least, I recollect no such expression in all his works; *ardens* being constantly joined to a word, denoting a substance of apparent light, heat, or flame, to which the allusion is easy, as *ardentes gladios*, *ardentes oculos*, *campos armis sublimibus ardentis*, and, by an easy metaphor, *ardentes hostes*; but no where, that I can find, to so abstract a notion, as that of *fight*. It seems to be to avoid this difficulty, that some have chosen to read *ardentis*, in the genitive, which yet Servius rejects as of no authority.

3. But the most glaring note of illegitimacy is in the line,

*Titboni primâ quot abest ab origine Caesar.*

It has puzzled all the commentators from old Servius

## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 55

temptation of disclosing thus much of one of the noblest fictions of antiquity ; and the rather,

down to the learned Mr. Martyn, to give any tolerable account of the poet's choice of *Titbonus*, from whom to derive the ancestry of Augustus, rather than *Anchises*, or *Assaracus*, who were not only more famous, but in the *direct* line. The pretences of any, or all of them, are too frivolous to make it necessary to spend a thought about them. The instance stands single in antiquity ; much less is there any thing like it to be found in the Augustan poets.

II. But the *phrasology* of these lines is the least of my objection. Were it ever so accurate, there is, besides, on the first view, a manifest absurdity in the *subject-matter* of them. For would any writer, of but common skill in the art of composition, close a long and elaborate allegory, the principal grace of which consists in its very mystery, with a cold and formal explanation of it ? or would he pay so poor a compliment to his patron, as to suppose his sagacity wanted the assistance of this additional triplet to lead him into the true meaning ? Nothing can be more abhorrent from the usual address and artifice of Virgil's manner. Or,

III. Were the *subject-matter* itself passable, yet, how, in defiance of all the laws of *disposition*, came it to be *forced* in here ? Let the reader turn to the passage, and he will soon perceive, that this could never be the *place* for it. The allegory being concluded, the poet returns to his subject, which is proposed in the six following lines :

*Interea Dryadum sylvas, saltusque sequamur  
Intactos, tua, Maecenas, haud mollia iussa ;*

as the propriety of allegoric composition, which made the distinguished pride of ancient poetry,

*Te sine nil altum mens inchoat : en age segnes  
Rumpe moras : vocat ingenti clamore Cithaeron,  
Tagetique canes, domitrixque Epidaurus equorum,  
Et vox assensu nemorum ingeminata remugit.*

Would now any one expect, that the poet, after having conducted the reader, thus respectfully, to the very threshold of his subject, should immediately run away again to the point from which he had set out, and this on so needless an errand, as the letting him into the secret of his allegory?

But this inserted triplet agrees as ill with what follows, as with what precedes it. For how abrupt is the transition, and unlike the delicate connexion, so studiously contrived by the Augustan poets, from

*Tithoni primâ quot abest ab origine Caesar,*

to

*Seu quis Olympiacae miratus praemia palmae, &c.*

When, omit but these interpolated lines, and see how gracefully, and by how natural a succession of ideas, the poet slides into the main of his subject :

*Interea Dryadum sylvas saltusque sequantur  
Intactos—*

*Te sine nil—*

*Rumpe moras : vocat ingenti clamore Cithaeron  
Tagetique canes, domitrixque Epidaurus EQUORUM,  
Et vox assensu nemorum ingeminata REMUGIT.*

*Seu quis Olympiacae miratus praemia palmae*

*Pascit EQUOS ; seu quis fortes ad aratra JUVENCOS.*

On the whole, I have not the least doubt, that the lines before us are the spurious offspring of some later

seems



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seems but little known or attended to by the modern professors of this fine art.

17. NIL ORITURUM ALIAS, NIL ORTUM  
TALE FATENTES.] *Il n'est impossible*, says M. DE  
BALZAC, in that puffed, declamatory rhapsody,  
entitled, LE PRINCE, *de résister au mouvement*

*poet*; if indeed the writer of them deserve that name; for, whoever he was, he is so far from partaking of the original spirit of Virgil, that at most he appears to have been but a servile and paltry mimic of Ovid; from the opening of whose *Metamorphoses* the design was clearly taken. The turn of the thought is evidently the same in both, and even the *expression*. *Mutatas dicere formas* is echoed by *ardentes dicere pugnas: dicere fert animus*, is, by an affected improvement, *accingar dicere*: and *Tithoni primâ ab origine* is almost literally the same as *primâque ab origine mundi*. For the *infection* of these lines in this place, I leave it to the curious to conjecture of it as they may; but in the mean time, must esteem the office of the true critic to be so far resembling that of the *poet* himself, as, within some proper limitations, to justify the *honest* liberty here taken.

*Cum tabulis animum censoris sumet honesti;*

*Audebit quaecunque parum splendoris habebunt*

*Et sine pondere erunt, et honore indigna feruntur,*

VERBA MOVERE LOCO; QUAMVIS INVIVA RE-  
CEDANT,

ET VERSENTUR ADHUC INTRA PENETRALIA  
VESTAE,

[2 Bp. ii. 110.

*interieur,*

*intérieur, qui me pousse. Je ne sçaurois m'empêcher de parler du ROY, et de sa vertu; de crier à tous les princes, que c'est l'exemple, qu'ils doivent suivre; DE DEMANDER A TOUS LES PEUPLES, ET A TOUS LES AGES, S'ILS ONT JAMAIS RIEN VU DE SEMBLABLE.* This was spoken of a king of France, who, it will be owned, had his virtues. But they were the virtues of the *man*, and not of the *prince*. This, however, was a distinction, which the eloquent encomiast was not aware of, or, to speak more truly, his business required him to overlook. For the whole elogy is worth perusing, as it affords a striking proof of the uniform genius of flattery, which, alike under all circumstances, and indifferent to all characters, can hold the same language of the weakest, as the ablest of princes, of LOUIS LE JUSTE, and CAESAR OCTAVIANUS AUGUSTUS.

23. SIC FAUTOR VETERUM, &c. to line 28.] The folly, here satirized, is common enough in all countries, and extends to all arts. It was just the same preposterous affectation of venerating antiquity, which put the connoisseurs in *painting*, under the emperors, on crying up the simple and rude sketches of AGLAOPHON and POLYGNOTUS, above the exquisite and finished pictures of PARRHASIUS and ZEUXIS. The account is given by Quinçilian, who, in his  
censure

## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 59

censure of this absurdity, points to the undoubted source of it. His words are these:  
 “ Primi quorum quidem opera non vetustatis  
 “ modò gratiâ visenda sunt, clari pictores fuisse  
 “ dicuntur Polygnotus et Aglaophon; quorum  
 “ simplex color tam sui studiosos adhuc habet,  
 “ ut illa propè rudia ac velut futurae mox artis  
 “ primordia, maximis, qui post eos extiterunt,  
 “ auctoribus praeferantur, PROPRIO QUODAM  
 “ INTELLIGENDI (ut mea fert opinio) AM-  
 “ BITU.” [L. xii. c. 10.] The lover of painting must be the more surprized at this strange preference, when he is told, that Aglaophon, at least, had the use of only *one single colour*; whereas Parrhasius and Zeuxis, who are amongst the *maximi auctores*, here glanced at, not only employed *different colours*, but were exceedingly eminent, the one of them for *correct drawing*, and the delicacy of his outline; the other, for his invention of that great secret of the *chiaro oscuro*.  
 “ Post Zeuxis et Parrhasius: quorum prior  
 “ LUMINUM UMBRARUMQUE INVENISSE RA-  
 “ TIONEM, secundus, EXAMINASSE SUBTILIUS  
 “ LINEAS DICITUR.” [Ibid.]

28. SI, QUIA GRAIORUM SUNT ANTIQUIS-  
 SIMA QUAEQUE SCRIPTA vel OPTIMA, &c.]  
 The common interpretation of this place supposes the poet to admit *the most ancient of the Greek*

*Greek writings to be the best.* Which were even contrary to all experience and common sense, and is directly confuted by the history of the Greek learning. What he allows is, the *superiority* of the oldest Greek writings *extant*; which is a very different thing. The turn of his argument confines us to this sense. For he would shew the folly of concluding the same of the *old Roman* writers, on their *first* rude attempts to copy the finished models of Greece, as of the *old Greek writers* themselves, who were furnished with the means of producing those *models* by long discipline and cultivation. This appears, certainly, from what follows:

*Venimus ad summum fortunæ: pingimus atque  
Psallimus et lætamur Achivis doctius unctis.*

The design of which hath been entirely overlooked. For it hath been taken only for a *general expression* of falsehood and absurdity, of just the same import as the proverbial line,

*Nil intra est oleæ, nil extra est in nuce duri.*

Whereas it was *designedly* pitched upon to convey a *particular illustration* of the very absurdity in question, and to shew the maintainers of it, from the nature of things, how senseless their position was. It is to this purpose: "As well  
" it may be pretended, that we *Romans* surpass  
" the *Greeks* in the arts of *painting, music, and*  
" *the*

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“ *the exercises of the palaestra*, which yet it is  
 “ confessed we do not, as that our *old* writers  
 “ surpass the *modern*. The absurdity, in either  
 “ case, is the same. For, as the Greeks, who  
 “ had long devoted themselves, with great and  
 “ continued application, to the practice of these  
 “ arts (which is the force of the epithet *UNCTI*,  
 “ here given them) must, for that reason, carry  
 “ the prize from the Romans, who have taken  
 “ very little pains about them; so, the modern  
 “ Romans, who have for a long time been  
 “ studying the *arts of poetry and composition*, must  
 “ needs excel the old Roman writers, who had  
 “ little or no acquaintance with those arts, and  
 “ had been trained, by no previous discipline,  
 “ to the exercise of them.”

The conciseness of the expression made it necessary to open the poet's sense at large. We now see that his intention, in these two lines, was to expose, in the way of *argumentative illustration*, the ground of that absurdity, which the preceding verses had represented as, at first sight, so shocking to *common sense*.

33. *UNCTIS*.] This is by no means a general, unmeaning epithet: but is beautifully chosen to express the unwearied *assiduity* of the Greek artists. For, the practice of *anointing* being essential to their agonistic trials, the poet

elegantly puts the attending *circumstance* for the thing itself. And so, in speaking of them, as UNCTI, he does the same, as if he had called them "the industrious, or *exercising* Greeks;" which was the very idea his argument required him to suggest to us.

43.—HONESTE.] Expressing the *credit* such a piece was held in, as had the fortune to be ranked *inter veteres*, agreeably to what he said above—PERFECTOS *veteresque*, line 37—and—*vetus atque PRORUS*, line 39: which affords a fresh presumption in favour of Dr. Bentley's conjecture on line 41, where, instead of *veteres poetas*, he would read,

*Inter quos referendus erit? veteresne PROBOSQUE,  
An quos, &c.*

54. ADEO SANCTUM EST VETUS OMNE POEMA.] The reader is not to suppose, that Horace, in this ridicule of the foolish adorers of antiquity, intended any contempt of the old Roman poets; who, as the old writers in every country, abound in strong sense, vigorous expression, and the truest representation of life and manners. His quarrel is only with the critic:

*Qui redit in fastos et virtutem aestimat annis.*

An affectation, which for its *folly*, if it had not



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too apparently sprung from a worse principle, deserved to be laughed at.

For the rest, he every where discovers a candid and just esteem of their earlier writers; as may be seen from many places in this very epistle; but more especially from that severe censure in 1 S. x. 17. (which hath more of acrimony in it than he usually allows to his satire) when, in speaking of the writers of the old comedy, he adds,

*Quos neque pulcher*

*Hermogenes unquam legit, neque simius iste*

*Nil praeter Calvum et doctus cantare Catullum.*

With all his zeal for correct writing, he was not, we see, of the humour of that delicate sort, who are for burning their old poets; and, to be well with women and court-critics, confine their reading and admiration to the innocent sing-song of some soft and fashionable rhymers, whose utter insipidity is a thousand times more insufferable than any barbarism.

56. PACUVIUS DOCTI FAMAM SENIS, ACCIUS ALTI.] The epithet *doctus*, here applied to the tragic poet, *Pacuvius*, is, I believe, sometimes misunderstood, though the opposition to *altus* clearly determines the sense. For, as this last word expresses the *sublime* of sentiment and expression, which comes from *nature*, so the former word must needs be interpreted of that

*exactness*

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*exactness* in both, or at least of that *skill* in the conduct of the scene (the proper *learning* of a dramatic poet) which is the result of *art*.

The Latin word *doctus* is indeed somewhat ambiguous: but we are chiefly misled by the English word, *learned*, by which we translate it, and by which, in general use, is meant, rather extensive reading, and what we call *erudition*, than a profound skill in the rules and principles of any art. But this last is frequently the sense of the Latin term *doctus*, as we may see from its application, in the best classic writers, to other, besides the literary professions. Thus, to omit other instances, we find it applied very often in Horace himself. It is applied to a *singing-girl*—*doctae* psallere Chiae—in one of his Odes, l. iv. 13. It is applied to several *mechanic arts* in this epistle—"doctus Achivis pingimus atque psallimus et luctamur:" It is even applied, *absolutely*, to the player Roscius—*doctus* Roscius, in line 82, where his skill in *acting* could only be intended by it. It is, also, in this sense, that he calls his imitator, *doctus*, i. e. skilled and knowing in his art, A. P. line 319. Nay, it is precisely in this sense that Quintilian uses the word, when he characterizes this very Pacuvius—*Pacuvium videri doctiorem, qui esse docti affectant, volunt* [l. x. c. 1.] i. e. *they, who affect to be thought knowing*

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*ing in the rules of dramatic writing, give this praise to Pacuvius.* The expression is so put, as if Quintilian intended a censure of these critics; because this pretence to dramatic art, and the strict imitation of the Greek poets, was grown, in his time, and long before it, into a degree of pedantry and *affetation*; no other merit, but this of *docti*, being of any significance, in their account. There is no reason to think that Quintilian meant to insinuate the poet's want of this merit, or his own contempt of it: though he might think, and with reason, that too much stress had been laid upon it by some men.

It is in the same manner that one of our own poets has been characterized; and the application of this term to him will shew the force of it, still more clearly.

In Mr. Pope's fine imitation of this epistle, are these lines—

In all debates, where critics bear a part,  
Not one but nods and talks of Jonson's *art*—

One sees, then, how Mr. Pope understood the *docti*, of Horace. But our Milton applies the word *learned* itself, and in the Latin sense of it, to Jonson—

When Jonson's *learned* sock is on—

For what is this *learning*? Indisputably, his *dramatic learning*, his skill in the scene, and his

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observance

observance of the ancient rules and practice. For, though Jonson was indeed *learned*, in every sense; it is the learning of his profession, as a comic artist, for which he is here celebrated.

The Latin substantive, *doctrina*, is used with the same latitude, as the adjective, *doctus*. It sometimes signifies the *peculiar sort* of learning, under consideration; though sometimes again it signifies *learning*, or erudition, at large. It is used in the former sense by Cicero, when he observes of the satires of Lucilius, that they were remarkable for their wit and pleasantry, not for their *learning*—*doctrina* mediocris. So that there is no contradiction in this judgment, as is commonly thought, to that of Quintilian, who declares roundly—*eruditio* in eo mira—For, though *doctrina* and *eruditio* be sometimes convertible terms, they are not so here. The *learning* Cicero speaks of in Lucilius, as being but *moderate*, is his learning, or skill, in the art of writing and composition.—That this was the whole purport of Cicero's observation, any one may see by turning to the place where it occurs, in the proeme to his first book DE FINIBUS.

59. VINCERE CAECILIUS GRAVITATE, TERENTIUS ARTE.] It should be observed, that  
the

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the judgment, here passed [from line 55 to 60] on the most celebrated Roman writers, being only a representation of the *popular* opinion, not of the poet's *own*, the commendations given to them are deserved, or otherwise, just as it chances.

*Interdum vulgus rectum videt, est ubi peccat.*

To give an instance of this in the line before us.

A critic of unquestioned authority acquaints us, wherein the *real distinct merit* of these two dramatic writers consists. "In ARGUMENTIS, "Caecilius palmam poscit; in ETHESIN, TERENTIUS." [Varro.] Now by *gravitate*, as applied to Caecilius, we may properly enough understand the *grave and affecting cast* of his comedy; which is further confirmed by what the same critic elsewhere observes of him: "PATHE "Trabea, Attilius, et CAECILIUS facile move- "runt." But Terence's characteristic of *painting the manners*, which is, plainly, the right interpretation of Varro's ETHESIN, is not so significantly expressed by the attribute *arte*, here given to him. The word indeed is of large and general import, and may admit of various senses; but, being here applied to a *dramatic* writer, it most naturally and properly denotes the *peculiar art* of his profession, that is, *the artificial texture of the plot*. And this, I doubt not, was the

very praise, the town-critics of Horace's time intended to bestow on this poet. The matter is easily explained.

The simplicity, and exact unity of the plots in the Greek comedies would be, of course, uninteresting to a people, not thoroughly instructed in the genuine beauties of the drama. They had too thin a contexture to satisfy the gross and lumpish taste of a Roman auditory. The Latin poets, therefore, bethought themselves of combining two stories into one. And this, which is what we call the *double plot*, affording the opportunity of more incidents, and a greater variety of *action*, was perfectly suited to their apprehensions. But, of all the Latin comedians, *Terence* appears to have practised this secret most assiduously: at least, as may be concluded from what remains of them. *Plautus* hath very frequently *single plots*, which he was enabled to support by, what was natural to him, a force of buffoon pleasantry. *Terence*, whose genius lay another way, or whose taste was abhorrent from such ribaldry, had recourse to the other expedient of *double plots*. And this, I suppose, is what gained him the popular reputation of being the most *artificial* writer for the stage. The *HECYRA* is the only one of his comedies, of the true ancient cast. And we know how it came off in the representation. That ill-success, and the simplicity



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city of its conduct have continued to draw upon it the same unfavourable treatment from the critics, to this day ; who constantly speak of it, as much inferior to the rest ; whereas, for the genuine beauty of dramatic design, and the observance, after the ancient Greek manner, of the nice dependency and coherence of the *fable* throughout, it is, indisputably, to every reader of true taste, the most masterly and exquisite of the whole collection.

63. INTERDUM VOLGUS RECTUM VIDET :  
EST UBI PECCAT.] The capricious levity of *popular opinion* hath been noted even to a proverb. And yet it is this, which, after all, *fixes* the fate of authors. This seemingly odd phenomenon I would thus account for.

What is usually complimented with the high and reverend appellation of *public judgment* is, in any single instance, but the repetition or echo, for the most part eagerly caught, and strongly reverberated on all sides, of a few leading voices, which have happened to gain the confidence, and so direct the *cry*, of the public. But (as, in fact, it too often falls out) this prerogative of the *few* may be abused to the prejudice of the *many*. The partialities of friendship, the fashionableness of the writer, his compliance with the reigning taste, the lucky concurrence of time

and opportunity, the cabal of a party, nay, the very freaks of whim and caprice; these, or any of them, as occasion serves, can support the dullest, as the opposite disadvantages can depress the noblest, performance; and give a currency or neglect to *either*, far beyond what the genuine character of each demands. Hence the *public voice*, which is but the aggregate of these corrupt judgments, infinitely multiplied, is, with the wise, at such a juncture, deservedly of little esteem. Yet, in a succession of such *judgments*, delivered at different times, and by different sets or juntos of these sovereign arbiters of the fate of authors, the public opinion naturally gets clear of these accidental corruptions. Every fresh succession shakes off some; till, by degrees, the work is seen in its proper form, unsupported of every other recommendation, than what its native inherent excellence bestows upon it. Then, and not till then, *the voice of the people* becomes sacred; after which it soon advances into *divinity*, before which all ages must fall down and worship. For now reason alone, without her corrupt assessors, takes the chair. And her sentence, when once promulgated, and authorized by the general voice, fixes the unalterable doom of authors. ΟΛΩΣ ΚΑΛΑ ΝΟΜΙΖΕ ΤΥΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΛΗΘΙΝΑ, ΤΑ ΔΙΑΠΑΝΤΟΣ ΑΡΕΣΚΟΝΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣΙΝ. [Longinus, § vii.]

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§ vii.] And the reason follows, agreeably to the account here given. Ὅταν γὰρ τοῖς ἀπὸ διαφορῶν ΕΠΙΤΗΔΕΥΜΑΤΩΝ, ΒΙΩΝ, ΖΗΛΩΝ, ΗΛΙΚΙΩΝ, λόγων, ἐν τι καὶ ταυτὸν ἅμα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἅπασι δοκῇ, τοῦ ἢ ἐξ ἀσυμφώνων ὡς κρίσις καὶ συγκατάθεσις τὴν ἐπὶ τῷ θαυμαζομένῳ ΠΙΣΤΙΝ ΙΣΧΥΡΑΝ ΛΑΜΒΑΝΕΙ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΜΦΙΑΕΚΤΟΝ. [Ibid.]

This is the true account of *popular fame*, which, while it well explains the ground of the poet's aphorism, suggests an obvious remark, but very mortifying to every candidate of literary glory. It is, that, whether he succeeds in his endeavours after public applause, or not, *fame* is equally out of his reach, and, as the moral poet teaches, *a thing beyond him, before his death*, on either supposition. For at the very time, that this bewitching music is sounding in his ears, he can never be sure, if, instead of the divine consentient harmony of a just praise, it be not only the discordant din and clamour of ignorance or prepossession.

If there be any exception to this melancholy truth, it must be in the case of some uncommon genius, whose superior power breaks through all impediments in his road to fame, and forces applause even from those very prejudices, that would obstruct his career to it.

It was the rare felicity of the poet, just mentioned, to receive, in his life-time, this sure and pleasing augury of immortality.

81. INGENIIS NON ILLE FAVET, &c.] MALHERBE was to the French, pretty much what HORACE had been to the Latin, poetry. These great writers had, each of them, rescued the lyric muse of their country out of the rude, ungracious hands of their old poets. And, as their talents of a *good ear*, *elegant judgment*, and *correct expression*, were the same, they presented her to the public in all the air and grace, and yet *severity*, of beauty, of which her form was susceptible. Their merits and pretensions being thus far resembling, the reader may not be incurious to know the fate and fortune of *each*. Horace hath very frankly told us, what befel himself from the malevolent and low passions of his countrymen. Malherbe did not come off, with the wits and critics of his time, much better; as we learn from a learned person, who hath very warmly recommended his writings to the public. Speaking of the envy, which pursued him in his *prose-works*; but, says he, “ comme  
 “ il faisoit une particuliere profession de la *poésie*,  
 “ c’est en cette qualité qu’il a de plus severes  
 “ censeurs, et receu des injustices plus signalées.  
 “ Mais il me semble que je fermerai la bouche  
 “ à ceux,

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“à ceux, qui le blament, quand je leur aurai  
 “monstré, que sa façon d’écrire est excellente,  
 “quoiqu’elle s’éloigne un peu de celle des nos  
 “ANCIENS POETES, QU’ILS LOUENT PLUSTOT  
 “PAR UN DEGOUST DES CHOSES PRESENTES,  
 “QUE PAR LES SENTIMENTS D’UNE VERI-  
 “TABLE ESTIME.” [DISC. DE M. GODEAU  
 SUR LES OEUVRES DE M. MALHERBE.]

### 97. SUSPENDIT MENTEM VULTUMQUE.]

The expression hath great elegance, and is not  
 liable to the imputation of *harsh, or improper*  
*construction*. For *suspendit* is not taken, with  
 regard either to *mentem* or *vultum*, in its *literal*,  
 but *figurative*, signification; and, thus, it be-  
 comes, in one and the *same* sense, applicable to  
*both*.

Otherwise, this way of coupling *two substan-*  
*tives* to a *verb*, which does not, in strict gram-  
 matical usage, *govern* both; or, if it doth, must  
 needs be construed in different senses; hath  
 given just offence to the best critics.

Mr. Pope censures a passage of this kind, in  
 the *Iliad*, with severity; and thinks *the taste of*  
*the antients was, in general, too good for those*  
*fooleries* [f].

Mr. Addison is perfectly of the same mind,  
 as appears from his criticism on that line in

[f] B. ix. 641.

Ovid,

Ovid, *Consiliis, non curribus utere nostris*. "This way of joining, says he, two such different ideas as chariot and counsel to the same verb, is mightily used by Ovid; but is a very low kind of wit, and has always in it a mixture of pun; because the verb must be taken in a different sense, when it is joined with one of the things, from what it has in conjunction with the other. Thus, in the end of this story, he tells you, that Jupiter flung a thunberbolt at Phaëton: *pariterque animaque rotisque expulit aurigam*: where he makes a forced piece of Latin (*animâ expulit aurigam*) that he may couple the soul and the wheels to the same verb [g]."

These, the reader will think, are pretty good authorities. For, in matters of *taste*, I know of none, that more deserve to be regarded. The mere verbal critic, one would think, should be cautious, how he opposed himself to them. And yet a very learned Dutchman, who has taken great pains in elucidating an old Greek love-story, which, with its more passionate admirers, may, perhaps, pass for the MARIANNE of antiquity, hath not scrupled to censure this decision of theirs very sharply [b].

[g] Notes on the story of Phaëton, line 23.

[b] JACOBI PHILIPPI D'ORVILLE *Animadversiones in CHARIT. APHROD.* lib. iv. c. 4.

Having



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Having transcribed the censure of Mr. Pope, who, indeed somewhat too hastily, suspects the line in Homer for an interpolation, our critic fastens upon him directly. EN COR ZENODOTI, EN JECUR CRATETIS ! But foul language and fair criticism are different things ; and what he offers of the *latter* rather accounts for than justifies the *former*. All he says on the subject, is in the good old way of *authorities*, which he diligently rakes together out of every corner of Greek and Roman antiquity. From all these he concludes, as he thinks, irresistibly, not that the passage in question *might* be *genuine* (for *that* few would dispute with him) but that the kind of expression itself is a *real beauty*. *Bona elocutio est : honesta figura*. Though, to the praise of his discretion be it remembered, he does not even venture on this assertion, without his usual support of *precedent*. And, for want of a better, he takes up with old *Servius*. For so, it seems, this grammarian hath declared himself, with respect to some expressions of the same kind in *Virgil*.

But let him make the best of his authorities. And, when he has done that, I shall take the liberty to assure him, that the persons, he contends against, do not think themselves in the least concerned with them. For, though he believes it an undeniable maxim, *Critici non esse inquirere, utrum recte autor quid scripserit, sed an omnino*

*omnino sic scripserit* [i]: yet, in the case before us, he must not be surprized, if others do not so conceive of it.

Indeed, where the critic would defend the *authenticity* of a word or expression, the way of *precedent* is, doubtless, the very best, that common sense allows to be taken. For the evidence of *fact*, at once, bears down all suspicion of *corruption* or *interpolation*. Again; if the *elegance* of single words (or of entire phrases, where the suspicion turns on the *oddity* or *uncommonness* of the *construction*, only) be the matter in dispute, full and precise authorities must decide it. For *elegance*, here, means nothing else but the practice of the best writers. And thus far I would join issue with the learned censurer; and should think he did well in prescribing this rule to himself in the correction of *approved ancient authors*.

But what have these cases to do with the point in question? The objection is made, not to *words*, which alone are capable of being justified by authority, but to *things*, which must ever be what they are, in spite of it. This mode of writing is shewn to be abundantly defective, for reasons taken from *the nature of our ideas*, and *the end and genius of the nobler forms of composition*. And what is it to tell us, that great writers have overlooked or neglected them?

[i] Ibid. vol. ii. p. 325.

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i. In our customary train of *thinking*, the mind is carried along, *in succession*, from *one* clear and distinct idea to *another*. Or, if the attention be *at once* employed on *two senses*, there is ever such a close and near analogy betwixt them, that the perceptive faculty, easily, and almost instantaneously, passing from the one to the other, is not divided in its regards betwixt them, but even seems to itself to consider them, as *one*: as is the case with *metaphor*; and, universally, with all the just forms of *allusion*. The union between the *literal* and *figurative* sense is so strict, that they run together in the imagination; and the effect of the *figure* is only to let in fresh light and lustre on the *literal* meaning. But now, when *two different, unconnected ideas* are obtruded at the same time upon us, the mind suffers a kind of violence and distraction, and is thereby put out of that natural state, in which it so much delights. To take the learned writer's instance from Polybius: ΕΛΠΙΔΑ & KEIPA ΠΡΟΣΛΑΜΒΑΝΕΙΝ. How different is the idea of *collecting forces*, and of that *act* of the mind, which we call *taking courage*! These two *perceptions* are not only distinct from each other, but totally unconnected by any *natural* bond of relationship betwixt them. And yet the word ΠΡΟΣΛΑΜΒΑΝΕΙΝ must be seen in this double  
view,

view, before we can take the full meaning of the historian.

2. This conjunction of *unrelated* ideas, by the means of a *common term*, agrees as ill to the *end and genius of the writer's composition*, as the *natural bent and constitution of the mind*. For the question is only about the *greater poetry*, which addresses itself to the *PASSIONS*, or *IMAGINATION*. And, in either case, this play of words, which Mr. Pope condemns, must be highly out of season.

When we are necessitated, as it were, to look different ways, and actually to contemplate two unconnected significations of the same word, before we can thoroughly comprehend its purpose; the mind is more amused by this fanciful conjunction of ideas, than is consistent with the artless, undesigned simplicity of *passion*. It disturbs and interrupts the flow of *affection*, by presenting this disparted image to the *fancy*. Again; where *fancy* itself is solely addressed, as in the *nobler descriptive species*, this arbitrary assemblage of ideas is not less improper. For the poet's business is now, to astonish or entertain the mind with a succession of *great* or *beautiful* images. And the intervention of this juggler's trick diverts the thought from contemplating its proper scenery. We should be admiring some glorious representation of *nature*, and are stopped, on a sudden, to observe the writer's *art*,  
whose

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whose ingenuity can fetch, out of one word, two such foreign and discrepant meanings.

In the lighter forms of poetry indeed, and more especially in the *burlesque epic*, this affectation has its *place*; as in that line of Mr. Pope, quoted by this critic;

*Sometimes counsel takes, and sometimes tea.*

For, 1. The writer's intention is here, not to *affect the passions*, or *transport the fancy*, but solely to *divert and amuse*. And to such end this species of trifling is very apposite. 2. The *manner*, which the burlesque epic takes to divert, is by confounding *great things with small*. A *mode of speech* then, which favours such *confusion*, is directly to its purpose. 3. This poem is, by its nature, *satirical*, and, like the *old comedy*, delights in exposing the faults and vices of *composition*. So that the *expression* is here properly employed (and this was, perhaps, the *first* view of the writer) to ridicule the use of it in *grave works*. If M. D'Orville then could seriously design to confute Mr. Pope's criticism by his own practice in that line of the *Rape of the Lock*, he has only shewn, that he does not, in the least, comprehend the real genius of this poem. But to return :

There is, as appears to me, but one case, in which this *double sense* of words can be admitted  
in

in the more solemn forms of poetry. It is, when, besides the plain literal meaning, which the context demands, the mind is carried forward to some more illustrious and important object. We have an instance in the famous line of Virgil,

*Attollens humeris famamque et fata nepotum.*

But this is so far from contradicting, that it furthers the writer's proper intention. We are not called off from the *subject-matter* to the observation of a *conceit*, but to the admiration of *kindred* sublime conceptions. For even here, it is to be observed, there is always required some previous dependency and relationship, though not extremely obvious, in the natures of the things themselves, whereon to ground and justify the analogy. Otherwise, the intention of the *double sense* is perfectly inexcusable.

But the instance from Virgil, as we have seen it explained (and for the first time) by a great critic [*i*], is so curious, that I shall be allowed to enlarge a little upon it: and the rather, as Virgil's practice in this instance will let us into the true secret of conducting these *double senses*.

The comment of *Servius* on this line is remarkable: "Hunc versum notant critici, "quasi superflue et inutiliter additum, nec con-

[*i*] D. L. vol. ii. p. 644.

"venientem



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“venientem *gravitati* ejus, namque est magis  
 “*neotericus*.” Mr. Addison conceived of it in  
 the same manner, when he said, “*This was*  
 “*the only witty line in the Æneis* ;” meaning such  
 a line as *Ovid* would have written. We see  
 the opinion which these Critics entertained of  
 the *double sense*, in *general*, in the greater Poetry.  
 They esteemed it a wanton play of fancy, mis-  
 becoming the dignity of the writer’s work, and  
 the gravity of his character. They took it, in  
 short, for a mere *modern* flourish, totally different  
 from the pure unaffected manner of genuine an-  
 tiquity. And thus far they unquestionably  
 judged right. Their defect was in not seeing  
 that the *use* of it, as here employed by the Poet,  
 was an exception to the *general rule*. But to  
 have seen this was not, perhaps, to be expected  
 even from these Critics.

However, from this want of penetration arose  
 a difficulty in determining whether to read,  
*Facta* or *Fata* Nepotum. And, as we now un-  
 derstand that *Servius* and his Critics were utter  
 strangers to Virgil’s noble idea, it is no wonder  
 they could not resolve it. But the *latter* is the  
 Poet’s own word. He considered this shield of  
 celestial make as a kind of Palladium, like the  
 ANCILE, which fell from Heaven, and used to  
 be carried in procession on the shoulders of the  
 SALII. “Quid de scutis, says Lactantius, jam

"vetustate putridis dicam? Quæ cum portant,  
 "Deos ipsos se gestare HUMERIS SUIS arbitran-  
 "tur." [Div. Inst. l. i. c. 21.]

Virgil, in a fine flight of imagination, alludes to this venerable ceremony, comparing, as it were, the shield of his Hero to the sacred AN-CILE; and in conformity to the practice in that sacred procession represents his Hero in the priestly office of Religion,

*Attollens HUMERO famamque et FATA Nepotum.*

This idea then of the sacred shield, the guard and glory of Rome, and on which, in this advanced situation, depended the fame and fortune of his country, the poet, with extreme elegance and sublimity, transfers to the shield which guarded their great progenitor, while he was laying the first foundations of the Roman Empire.

But to return to the subject before us. What has been said of the impropriety of *double senses*, holds of *the construction of a single term in two senses*, even though its authorized usage may equally admit *both*. So that I cannot be of a mind with the learned critic's *wise men* [k]; *who acknowledge an extreme elegance in this form*,

[k] At inspicimus porro, quid alii, quibus correctius sapit, de hoc loquendi modo CENSUERINT. Agnoscunt enim, etc. p. 299.

when

when the governing verb equally corresponds to the two substantives. But when it properly can be applied but to one of them, and with some force and straining only to the second, as commonly happens with the application of one verb to two substantives, it then degenerates, as Mr. Addison observes, into a mere quibble, and is utterly incompatible with the graver forms of composition. And for this we have the concurrent authority of the *cordati* themselves, who readily admit, *duram admodum et xalaxousiwtépan fieri orationem, si verbum hoc ab alterutra abhorreat* [1]. Without softening matters, besides the former absurdity of a second sense, we are now indebted to a forced and barbarous construction for any second sense at all.

But surely this venerable bench of critics, to whom our censurer thinks fit to make his solemn appeal, were not aware of the imprudence of this concession. For why, if one may presume to ask, is the latter use of this figure condemned, but for reasons, which shew the manifest absurdity of the thing, however countenanced by authorities? And is not this the case of the former? Or, is the transgression of the standing rules of good sense, in the judgment of these censors, a more pardonable crime in a writer, than of common usage or grammar?

[1] Ibid.

After all, since he lays so great stress on his *authorities*, it may not be amiss to consider the proper force of them.

The form of speaking under consideration has been censured as a *trifling, affected witticism*. This *censure* he hopes entirely to elude, by shewing it was in use, more especially among two sorts of persons, the least likely to be infected with *wrong taste*, the *oldest*, that is to say, the *simplest*; and the most *refined* writers. In short, he thinks to stop all mouths, by alledging instances from *Homer* and *Virgil*.

But what if Homer and Virgil in the few examples of this kind to be met with in their writings have *erred*? And, which is more, what if that very *simplicity* on the one hand, and *refinement* on the other, which he builds so much upon, can be shewn to be the *natural* and almost necessary *occassions* of their falling into such *errors*? This, I am persuaded, was the truth of the case. For,

1. In the *simpler ages of learning*, when, as yet, composition is not turned into an *art*, but every writer, especially of vehement and impetuous genius, is contented to put down his *first thoughts*, and, for their *expression*, takes up with the most obvious words and phrases that present themselves to him, this improper construction will not be unfrequent. For the  
writer,

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writer, who is not knowing enough to take offence at these niceties, having an immediate occasion to express *two things*, and finding *one word*, which, in common usage, at least with a little straining, extends to *both*, he looks no further, but, as suspecting no fault, employs it without scruple. And I am the more confirmed in this account, from observing, that sometimes, where the governing *verb* cannot be made to bear this double sense, and yet the meaning of the writer is clear enough from the context, the proper word is altogether omitted. Of this kind are several of the *modes of speaking*, alledged by the writer as instances of the *double sense*. As in that of Sophocles [*m*], where Electra, giving orders to Chrysothemis, about the disposal of the *libations*, destined for the tomb of her father, delivers herself thus,

ΑΛΛ' ἢ ΠΝΟΑΙΣΙΝ, ἢ βαθυχαφεῖ ΚΟΝΕΙ  
ΚΡΥΨΟΝ viv.

The writer's first intention was to look out for some such *verb*, as would equally correspond to *πνοαῖς* and *κόνη*: but this not occurring, he sets down one, that only agrees to the last, and leaves the other to be understood, or supplied by the reader; as it easily might, the scope of the place necessarily directing him to it. It cannot

[*m*] Line 437.

be supposed, that Sophocles designed to say, *κρύψον πνοαῖς*. There is no affinity of *sense* or *sound* to lead him to such construction. Again; in that verse of Homer [n],

ἸΠΠΟΙ ἀεσπίποδες, καὶ ποικίλα ΤΕΤΧΕ' ΕΚΕΙΤΟ,  
the poet never meant to say ἵπποι ἑκένω, but neglectingly left it thus, as trusting the nature of the thing would instruct the reader to supply ἕρασαν, or some such word expressive of the *posture* required.

Nay, writers of more exactness than these simple Greek poets have occasionally overlooked such inaccuracies: as Cicero [o], who, when more intent on his *argument* than *expression*, lets fall this impropriety, *Nec vero SUPRA TER- RAM, sed etiam IN INTIMIS EJUS TENEBRIS plurimarum rerum LATET utilitas*. It is plain, the writer, conceiving *extat*, *patet*, or some such word, to be necessarily suggested by the tenor of his sentence, never troubled himself to go back to insert it. Yet these are brought as examples of the *double application of single words*. The truth is, they are examples of *indiligence* in the writers, and as such, may shew us, how easily they might fall, for the same reason, into the impropriety of *double senses*. In those of this class

[n] Iliad, I. 327.

[o] N. D. ii. 64.



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then the impropriety, complained of, is the effect of mere *inattention or carelessness*.

2. On the other hand, when this negligent simplicity of *thinking and speaking* gives way to the utmost polish and refinement in *both*, we are then to expect it, for the contrary reason. For the more obvious and natural forms of writing being, now, grown common, are held insipid, and the public taste demands to be gratified by the seasoning of a more studied and artificial expression. It is not enough to *please*; the writer must find means to *strike and surprize*. And hence the *antithesis*, the *remote allusion*, and every other mode of *affected eloquence*. But of these the *first* that prevails, is the application of the *double sense*. For, the general use justifying it, it easily passes with the reader and writer too, for *natural expression*; and yet as splitting the attention suddenly, and at once, on two different views, carries with it all the novelty and surprize, that are wanted. When the public taste is not, yet, far gone in this refinement, and the writer hath himself the truest taste (which was VIRGIL's case), such affectations will not be very common; or, when they do occur, will, for the most part, be agreeably softened. As in the instance of *retroque pedem cum voce repressit*; where, by making *voce* immediately dependent on the *preposition*, and re-

motely on the *verb*, he softens the harshness of the expression, which seems much more tolerable in this form, than if he had put it, *pedem vocemque repressit*. So again in the line,

*Crudeles aras trajecitque pectora ferro  
Nudavit,*

the incongruity of the two senses in *nudavit*, is the less perceived from its metaphorical application to one of them.

But the desire of *pleasing continually*, which, in the circumstances supposed, insensibly grows into a *habit*, must, of necessity, betray writers of less taste and exactness into the frequent commission of this fault. Which, as Mr. Addison takes notice, was remarkably the case with OVID.

The purpose of all this is to shew, that the use of this *form of speaking* arose from *negligence*, or *affectation*, never from *judgment*. And such being the obvious, and, it is presumed, true account of the matter, the learned *animadvertor* on CHARITON is left, as I said, to make the best of his *authorities*; or, even to enlarge his list of them with the *centuries* [c] of his good friends, at his leisure. For till he can tell us of a writer, who, neither in his *careless* nor *ambitious* humours, is capable of this folly, his accumulated citations, were they more to his pur-

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pose than many of them are, will do him little service. Unless, perhaps, we are to give up common sense to authority, and pride ourselves on mimicking the very defects of our *bettors*. And even here he need not be at a loss for *precedents*. For so the disciples of Plato, we are told, in former times, affected to be *round-shoulder'd*, in compliment to their master; and Aristotle's worshippers, because of a natural impediment in this philosopher's speech, thought it to their credit to turn *stammerers*. And without doubt, while this fashion prevailed, there were critics, who found out a *je ne sçai quoi* in the air of the one party, and in the *eloquence* of the other.

97. SUSPENDIT PICTA VULTUM MENTEM-  
QUE TABELLA.] Horace judiciously describes *painting* by that peculiar circumstance, which does most honour to this fine art. It is, that, in the hands of a master, it attaches, not the *eyes* only, but the very *soul*, to its representation of the *human affections and manners*. For it is in contemplating *subjects* of this kind, that the mind, with a fond and eager attention, *hangs* on the picture. Other imitations may *please*, but this warms and transports with *passion*. And, because whatever addresses itself immediately to the *eye* affects us most, hence it is, that painting, so employed, becomes more efficacious to  
express

express the *manners* and imprint *characters*, than poetry itself: or rather, hath the advantages of the best and usefullest species of poetry, the *dramatic*, when enforced by just action on the stage.

Quintilian gives it the like preference to oratory. Speaking of the use of *action* in an orator, he observes, "Is [gestus] quantum habet in oratore, momenti; satis vel ex eo patet, quod pleraque, etiam citra verba, significat. Quippe non manus solum, sed nutus etiam declarant nostram voluntatem, et in mutis pro sermone sunt: et salutatio frequenter sine voce intelligitur atque afficit, et ex ingressu vultuque perspicitur habitus animorum: et animantium quoque, sermone carentium, ira, laetitia, adulatio, et oculis et quibusdam aliis corporis signis deprehenditur. Nec mirum, si ista, quae tamen aliquo sunt posita motu, tantum in animis valent: quum *pictura, tacens opus, et habitus semper ejusdem, sic intimos penetret affectus, ut ipsam vim dicendi nonnunquam superare videatur* [p]."

We see then of what importance it is, since *affections* of every kind are equally within his power, that the painter apply himself to excite only *those*, which are subservient to good morals. An importance, of which Aristotle himself (who

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was no enthusiast in the fine arts) was so sensible, that he gives it in charge, amongst other political instructions, to the governors of youth, "that they allow them to see no other pictures, "than such as have this moral aim and tendency; of which kind were more especially "those of POLYGNOTUS." [POLIT. lib. viii. c. 5.]

For the *manner*, in which this moral efficacy of picture is brought about, we find it agreeably explained in that conversation of *Socrates* with *Parrhasius* in the *Memorabilia* of *Xenophon*. The whole may be worth considering.

"PAINTING, said *Socrates*, one day, in a "conversation with the painter *Parrhasius*, is, I "think, the resemblance or imitation of sensible objects. For you represent in colours, "bodies of all sorts, *hollow and projecting, bright and obscure, hard and soft, old and new.*"—"We "do."—"And, when you would draw beautiful "pourtraits, since it is not possible to find any "single figure of a man, faultless in all its parts "and of exact proportion; your way is to collect, "from *several*, those members or features, which "are most perfect in each, and so, by joining "them together, to compound one whole body, "completely beautiful."—"That is our method."—"What then, continued *Socrates*, and "are you not able, also, to imitate in colours, the

"MANNERS;

“MANNERS; those tendencies and dispositions of the soul, which are benevolent, friendly, and amiable; such as inspire love and affection into the heart, and whose soft insinuations carry with them the power of persuasion?”

“How, replied Parrhasius, can the pencil imitate *that*, which hath no proportion, colour, or any other of those properties, you have been just now enumerating, as the objects of sight?”—“Why, is it not true, returned Socrates, that a man sometimes casts a *kind*, sometimes an *angry*, look on others?”—“It is.”—“There must then be something in the eyes capable of expressing those passions.”—“There must.”—“And is there not a wide difference between the look of him, who takes part in the prosperity of a friend, and another, who sympathizes with him in his sorrows?”—“Undoubtedly, there is the widest. The countenance, in the one case, expresses joy, in the other, concern.”—“These affections may then be represented in picture.”—“They may so.”—“In like manner, all other dispositions of our nature, *the lofty and the liberal, the abject and ungenerous, the temperate and the prudent, the petulant and profligate*, these are severally discernible by the *look or attitude*: and that, whether we observe men in *action*, or at *rest*. “They are.”—“And these, therefore, come within  
“the



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“the power of graphical imitation?”—“They do.”—“Which then, concluded Socrates, do you believe, men take the greatest pleasure in contemplating; such imitations, as set before them the GOOD, the LOVELY, and the FAIR, or those, which represent the BAD, the HATEFUL, and the UGLY, *qualities and affections of humanity?*”—“There can be no doubt,” said Parrhasius, of their giving the preference “to the former.” [Lib. iii.]

The conclusion, the *philosopher* drives at in this conversation, and which the *painter* readily concedes to him, is what, I am persuaded, every master of the art would be willing to act upon, were he at liberty to pursue the bent of his natural genius and inclination. But it unfortunately happens, to the infinite prejudice of this *mode of imitation*, above all others, that the artist *designs* not so much what the dignity of his profession requires of him, or the general taste of those he would most wish for his judges, approves; as what the rich or noble *connoisseur*, who *bespeaks* his work, and prescribes the subject, demands. What this has usually been, let the history of ancient and modern painting declare [q]. Yet, considering its vast power

[q] There having been such wretches, as the painter Plutarch speaks of—Χαίριφάνης, ἀκολούθως ὁμιλίας γυναικῶν πρὸς ἄνδρας. De aud. Poët.

in

in MORALS, as explained above, one cannot enough lament the ill destiny of this divine ART; which, from the chaste hand-maid of *virtue*, hath been debauched, in violence to her nature, to a shameless prostitute of *vice*, and procuress of *pleasure*.

117. SCRIBIMUS INDOCTI DOCTIQUE POEMATA PASSIM.] The DOCTI POETAE have at all times been esteemed by the wise and good, or, rather, have been revered, as Plato speaks, ὡς περ παλαιοὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ ἡγεμόνες.

As for the INDOCTI, we may take their character as drawn by the severe, but just, pen of our great Milton.—“Poëtas equidem verè  
 “dictos et diligo et colo et audiendo sæpissimè  
 “delector—istos verò versiculorum nugivendos  
 “quis non oderit? quo genere nihil stultius  
 “aut vanius aut corruptius, aut mendacius.  
 “Laudant, vituperant, sine delectu, sine dis-  
 “crimine, judicio aut modo, nunc principes,  
 “nunc plebeios, doctos juxta atque indoctos,  
 “probos an improbos perindè habent; prout  
 “cantharus, aut spes nummuli, aut fatuus ille  
 “furor inflat ac rapit; congestis undique et  
 “verborum et rerum tot discoloribus ineptiis  
 “tamque putidis, ut laudatum longè præstet  
 “fileri, et pravo, quod aiunt, vivere naso,  
 “quàm sic laudari: vituperatus verò quí sit,  
 “haud

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“haud mediocri sanè honori sibi ducat, se tam  
“absurdis, tam stolidis nebulonibus displicere.”

DEF. SECUND. PRO POP. ANG. p. 337. 4<sup>to</sup>.  
Lond. 1753.

118. HIC ERROR TAMEN, &c.] What follows from hence to line 136, containing an encomium on *the office of poets*, is one of the leading beauties in the epistle. Its artifice consists in this, that, under the cover of a negligent commendation, interspersed with even some *traits* of pleasantry upon them, it insinuates to the emperor, in the manner the least offensive and ostentatious, the genuine merits, and even *sacredness* of their character. The whole is a fine instance of that address, which, in delivering rules for this kind of writing, the poet prescribes elsewhere :

- *Et sermone opus est modo tristi, saepe jocosò,*  
- *Defendente vicem modo rhetoris atque poetæ;*

Interdum URBANI PARCENTIS VIRIBUS AT-  
QUE

EXTENUANTIS EAS CONSULTO. [1 S. x. 14.]

This conduct, in the place before us, shews the poet's exquisite knowledge of *human nature*. For there is no surer method of removing prejudices, and gaining over *others* to an esteem of any thing we would recommend, than by not appearing to lay too great a stress on it *ourselves*.

BY JAMES MONTAGU, ESQ. LONDON: Printed by A. MILLAR, in Pall-mall. 1753.

It is, further, a proof of his intimate acquaintance with the peculiar turn of the *great*; who, not being forward to think highly of any thing but themselves and their own dignities, are, with difficulty, brought to conceive of other accomplishments, as of much value; and can only be won by the fair and candid address of their apologist, who must be sure not to carry his praises and pretensions too high. It is this art of entering into the *characters, prejudices, and expectations* of others, and of knowing to suit our application, prudently, but with innocence, to them, which constitutes what we call A KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD. An art, of which the great poet was a consummate master, and than which there cannot be a more useful or amiable quality. Only we must take care not to confound it with that supple, versatile, and intriguing genius, which, taking all shapes, and reflecting all characters, generally passes for it in the commerce of the world, or rather is prized much above it; but, as requiring no other talents in the possessor, than those of a *low cunning and corrupt design*, is of all others the most mischievous, worthless, and contemptible character, that infects human life,

118. HIC ERROR TAMEN ET LEVIS HAEC  
INSANIA QUANTAS VIRTUTES HABEAT, SIC  
COLLIGE:]

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COLLIGE.] This apology for *poets*, and, in them, for *poetry* itself, though delivered with much apparent negligence and unconcern, yet, if considered, will be found to comprize in it every thing, that any, or all, of its most zealous advocates have ever pretended in its behalf. For it comprehends,

I. [From line 118 to 124,] THE PERSONAL GOOD QUALITIES OF THE POET. Nothing is more insisted on by those, who take upon themselves the patronage and recommendation of any *art*, than that it tends to raise in the professor of it all those *virtues*, which contribute most to his *own* proper enjoyment, and render him most agreeable to *others*. Now this, it seems, may be urged, on the side of *poetry*, with a peculiar force. For not only the *study* of this art hath a *direct* tendency to produce a neglect or disregard of *worldly honours and emoluments* (from the too eager appetite of which almost all the *calamities*, as well as the more unfriendly *vices*, of men arise) but he, whom the benign aspect of the muse hath glanced upon, and destined for her peculiar service, is, by *constitution*, which is ever the best security, fortified against the attacks of them. Thus his RAPTURES in the enjoyment of his muse make him overlook the common accidents of life: [line 121] *he is generous, open, and undesigning, by NATURE*: [line 122]

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to

to which we must not forget to add, that he is *temperate*, that is to say, *poor*, by PROFESSION.

VIVIT SILIQUIS ET PANE SECUNDO.

II. [From line 124 to 132.] THE UTILITY OF THE POET TO THE STATE: and this both on a *civil* and *moral* account. For, 1. the poets, whom we read in our younger years, and from whom we learn the *power of words*, and *hidden harmony of numbers*, that is, as a profound Scotchman teaches, the *first and most essential principles* of eloquence [*r*], enable, by degrees, and instruct their pupil to appear, with advantage, in that extensively useful capacity of a public speaker. And, indeed, graver writers than our poet have sent the orator to this school. But the pretensions of poetry go much farther. It delights [from line 130 to 132] to immortalize the triumphs of virtue: to *record* or *feign* illustrious examples of heroic worth, for the service of the *rising age*: and, which is the last and best fruit of philosophy itself, it can relieve even the languor of *ill-health*, and sustain *poverty* herself under the scorn and insult of contumelious opulence. 2. In a *moral* view its services are not less considerable. (For it may be observed the *poet* was so far of a mind with the *philosopher*,

[*r*] See an Essay on the *Composition of the Antients*, by J. GEDDES, Esq;



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to give no quarter to *immoral poets*). And to this end it serves, 1. [line 127] *in turning the ear of youth* from that early corruptor of its innocence, the seducement of a *loose and impure communication*. 2. Next [line 128] in forming our riper age (which it does with all the address and tenderness of *friendship: AMICIS praeceptis*) *by the sanctity and wisdom of its precepts*. And, 3. which is the proper office of *tragedy*, in *correcting the excesses of the natural passions* [line 122]. The reader who doth not turn himself to the original, will be apt to mistake this detail of the virtues of poetry, for an account of the policy and legislation of ancient and modern times; whose proudest boast, when the philanthropy of their enthusiastic projectors ran at the highest, was but to *prevent the impressions of vice: to form the mind to habits of virtue: and to curb and regulate the passions*.

III. HIS SERVICES TO RELIGION. This might well enough be said, whether by *religion* we understand an *internal reverence* of the gods, which poetry first and principally intended; or their *popular adoration and worship*, which, by its *fictions*, as of necessity conforming to the received fancies of superstition, it must greatly tend to promote and establish. But the poet, artfully seizing a circumstance, which supposes

and includes in it both these respects, renders his defence vastly interesting.

All the customary *addresses* of heathenism to its gods, more especially on any great and solemn emergency, were the work of the poet. For *nature*, it seems, had taught the pagan world, what the Hebrew prophets themselves did not disdain to practise, that, to lift the imagination, and, with it, the sluggish affections of human nature, to heaven, it was expedient to lay hold on every assistance of art. They therefore presented their supplications to the divinity in the richest and brightest dress of eloquence, which is poetry. Not to insist, that *devotion*, when sincere and ardent, from its very *nature*, enkindles a glow of thought, which communicates strongly with the transports of poetry. Hence *the language of the gods* (for so was poetry accounted, as well from its being the divinest species of communication, our rude conceptions can well frame even for superior intelligencies, as for that it was the fittest vehicle of our applications to them) became not the ornament only, but an *essential* in the ceremonial, of paganism. And this, together with an allusion to *a form of public prayer* (for such was his *secular ode*) composed by himself, gives, at once, a grace and sublimity to this part of the apology, which are perfectly inimitable.

Thus

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Thus hath the great poet, in the compass of a few lines, drawn together a complete defence of his *art*. For what more could the warmest admirer of poetry, or, because zeal is quickened by opposition, what more could the vehement declaimer against Plato (who proscribed it), urge in its behalf, than that it furnishes, to the poet himself, the surest means of *solitary and social* enjoyment: and further serves to the most important CIVIL, MORAL, and RELIGIOUS purposes?

119. — VATIS AVARUS NON TEMERE EST ANIMUS.] There is an unlucky Italian proverb, which says, *Chi ben scrive, non sarà mai ricco*.—The true reason, without doubt, is here given by the poet.

124. MILITIAE QUAMQUAM FIGER ET MALUS.] The observation has much grace, as referring to himself, who had acquired no credit, as a soldier, in the civil wars of his country.—We have an example of this misalliance between the *poetic* and *military* character, recorded in the history of our own civil wars, which may be just worth mentioning. Sir P. Warwick, speaking of the famous Earl of *Newcastle*, observes—"his edge had too much  
"of the razor in it; for he had a tincture of a

“romantic spirit, and had the misfortune to  
 “have somewhat of the poet in him; so as he  
 “chose Sir William Davenant, an eminent  
 “good poet, and loyal gentleman, to be lieu-  
 “tenant-general of his ordnance. This inclina-  
 “tion of his own, and such kind of witty so-  
 “ciety (to be modest in the expressions of it)  
 “diverted many councils, and lost many oppor-  
 “tunities, which the nature of that affair, this  
 “great man had now entered into, required.”  
 MEMOIRS, p. 235.

132. CASTIS CUM PUERIS, &c.] We have,  
 before, taken notice, how properly the poet, for  
 the easier and more successful introduction of  
 his apology, assumed the person *urbani, parentis*  
*viribus*. We see him here, in *that* of *rhitoris*  
*atque poetæ*. For admonished, as it were, by  
 the rising dignity of his subject, which led him  
 from the *moral*, to speak of the *religious* uses of  
 poetry, he insensibly drops the *badineur*, and  
 takes an air, not of seriousness only, but of  
 solemnity. This change is made with *art*. For  
 the attention is carried from the uses of poetry,  
 in *consoling the unhappy*, by the easiest transition  
 imaginable, to the still more solemn application  
 of it to the *offices of piety*. And its *use* is; to  
 impress on the mind a stronger sense of the  
 weight of the poet's plea, than could have been  
 expected

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expected from a more direct and continued declamation. For this is the constant and natural effect of knowing to pass from *gay* to *severe*, with grace and dignity.

169. SED HABET COMOEDIA TANTO PLUS ONERIS, QUANTO VENIAE MINUS.] Tragedy, whose intention is to *affect*, may secure what is most essential to its *kind*, though it fail in some minuter resemblances of *nature*: Comedy, proposing for its main end *exact representation*, is fundamentally defective, if it do not perfectly succeed in it. And this explains the ground of the poet's observation, that comedy hath *veniae minus*; for he is speaking of the draught of the *manners* only, in which respect a greater *indulgence* is very deservedly shewn to the tragic than comic writer. But though tragedy hath thus far the advantage, yet, in another respect, its laws are more severe than those of comedy; and that is in the conduct of the *fable*. It may be asked then, which of the two dramas is, on the whole, most difficult. To which the answer is decisive. For tragedy, whose end is the *pathos*, produces it by *action*, while comedy produces its end, the *humourous*, by *character*. Now it is much more difficult to paint manners, than to plan action; because *that* requires the

philosopher's knowledge of human nature; *this*, only the historian's knowledge of human events.

It is true, in one sense, the *tragic* muse has *veniae minus*; for though grave and pleasant scenes may be indifferently represented, or even mixed together, in comedy, yet, in tragedy, the serious and solemn air must prevail throughout. Indeed, our Shakespeare has violated this rule, as he hath, upon occasion, almost every other rule, of just criticism: Whence, some writers, taking advantage of that idolatrous admiration which is generally professed for this great poet, and nauseating, I suppose, the more common, though juster, forms of literary composition, have been for turning his very transgression of the principles of common sense, into a standing precept for the stage. "It is said, that, if "comedy may be wholly *serious*, why may not "tragedy now and then be indulged in being "gay?" If these critics be in earnest, in putting this question, they need not long wait for an answer. The *end* of comedy being *to paint the manners*, nothing hinders (as I have shewn at large in the dissertation *on the provinces of the drama*) but "that it may take either character "of *pleasant* or *serious*, as it chances, or even "unite them both in one piece:" But the end of tragedy being *to excite the stronger passions*, this discordancy in the subject breaks the flow  
of



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of those passions, and so prevents, or lessens at least, the very effect which this drama primarily intends. "It is said, indeed, that this contrast "of *grave* and *pleasant* scenes, heightens the "*passion*:" if it had been said that it heightens the *surprise*, the observation had been more just. Lastly, "we are told, that this is nature, "which generally blends together the *ludicrous* "and the *sublime*." But who does not know

*That art is nature to advantage dress'd;*

and that to dress our nature *to advantage* in the present instance, that is, in a composition whose laws are to be deduced from the consideration of its *end*, these characters are to be kept, by an artist, perfectly distinct?

However, this restraint upon tragedy does not prove that, upon the whole, it has *plus oneris*. All I can allow is, that either drama has *weight* enough, in all reason, for the ablest *shoulders* to sustain.

177. QUEM TULIT AD SCENAM VENTOSO  
GLORIA CURRU, EXANIMAT LENTUS SPEC-  
TATOR, &c. to line 182.] There is an exquisite spirit of pleasantry in these lines, which hath quite evaporated in the hands of the critics. These have gravely supposed them to come from the *person* of the *poet*, and to contain his serious censure of the vanity of poetic fame. Whereas,  
besides

besides the manifest absurdity of the thing, its inconsistency with what is delivered elsewhere on this subject [A. P. line 324.] where the Greeks are commended as being *praeter laudem nullius avari*, absolutely requires us to understand them as proceeding from an *objector*; who, as the poet hath very satirically contrived, is left to expose himself in the very terms of his *objection*. He had just been blaming the venality of the Roman dramatic writers. They had shewn themselves more sollicitous about *filling their pockets*, than deserving the reputation of good poets. And, instead of insisting further on the excellency of this *latter* motive, he stops short, and brings in a bad poet himself to laugh at it.

“And, what then, says he, you would have  
 “us yield ourselves to the very wind and gust  
 “of praise; and, dropping all inferior considerations, drive away to the expecting stage  
 “in the *puffed car of vain-glory*? For what?  
 “To be *dispirited*, or blown up with air, as the  
 “capricious spectator shall think fit to enforce  
 “or withhold his *inspirations*. And is this the  
 “mighty benefit of your vaunted passion for  
 “fame? No; farewell the stage, if the breath  
 “of others is *that*, on which the silly bard is  
 “to depend for the contraction or enlargement  
 “of his dimensions.” To all which convincing rhetoric, the poet condescends to say nothing;

as

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as well knowing, that no truer service is, oftentimes, done to virtue or good sense, than when a knave or fool is left to himself, to employ his idle raillery against either.

These interlocutory passages, laying open the sentiments of those against whom the poet is disputing, are very frequent in the *critical and moral* writings of Horace, and are well suited to their dramatic genius and original.

210. ILLE PER EXTENTUM FUNEM, &c.]

The Romans, who were immoderately addicted to spectacles of every kind, had in particular esteem the *funambuli*, or *rope-dancers* :

*Ita populus studio stupidus in FUNAMBULO*

*Animum occuparat.*

PROL. in HECYR.

From the admiration of whose tricks the expression, *ire per extentum funem*, came to denote, proverbially, *an uncommon degree of excellence and perfection in any thing*. The allusion is, here, made with much pleasantry, as the poet had just been raillerying their fondness for these *extraordinary achievements*.

Ibid. ILLE PER EXTENTUM FUNEM, &c. to line 214.] It is observable, that Horace, here, makes his own *feeling* the test of poetical merit. Which is said with a philosophical exactness.

For the *pathos* in tragic, *humour* in comic, and the same holds of the *sublime* in the narrative, and of every other *species* of excellence in universal poetry, is the object not of *reason*, but *sentiment*; and can be estimated only from its *impression* on the mind, not by any speculative or general *rules*. Rules themselves are indeed nothing else but an appeal to *experience*; conclusions drawn from wide and general observation of the aptness and efficacy of certain *means* to produce those *impressions*. So that feeling or sentiment itself is not only the surest but the sole *ultimate* arbiter of works of genius.

Yet, though this be true, the *invention* of *general rules* is not without its merit, nor the *application* of them without its *use*, as may appear from the following considerations.

It may be affirmed, universally, of all *didactic writing*, that it is employed in *referring particular facts to general principles*. General principles themselves can often be referred to others more general; and these again carried still higher, till we come to a *single principle*, in which all the rest are involved. When this is done, science of every kind hath attained its highest perfection.

The account, here given, might be illustrated from various instances. But it will be sufficient to confine ourselves to the single one of  
criticism;

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*criticism*; by which I understand that *species* of didactic writing, which *refers to general rules the virtues and faults of composition*. And the perfection of this *art* would consist in an ability to refer *every* beauty and blemish to a separate class; and *every* class, by a gradual progression, to some *one* single principle. But the *art* is, as yet, far short of perfection. For many of these beauties and blemishes can be referred to no general rule at all; and the rules, which have been discovered, seem many of them unconnected, and not reducible to a common principle. It must be admitted, however, that such critics are employed in their proper office, as contribute to the *confirmation* of rules already established, or the *invention* of new ones.

Rules already established are then *confirmed*, when more *particulars* are referred to them. The invention of *new* rules implies, 1. A *collection* of various particulars, not yet regulated. 2. A *discovery* of those circumstances of *resemblance* or *agreement*, whereby they become capable of being regulated. And, 3. A subsequent *regulation* of them, or arrangement into *one* class according to *such* circumstances of *agreement*. When this is done, the rule is completed. But if the critic is not able to observe any *common* circumstance of resemblance in the several particulars he hath collected, by which they may, all of them,

them, be referred to one general class, he hath then made no advancement in the *art of criticism*. Yet the collection of his particular observations may be of use to other critics; just as collections of natural history, though no part of philosophy, may yet assist philosophical enquirers.

We see then from this general view of the matter, that the *merit* of inventing *general rules* consists in reducing criticism to an *art*; and that the *use* of applying them, in practice, when the art is thus formed, is, to direct the caprices of *taste* by the authority of rule, which we call *reason*.

And, thus much being premised, we shall now be able to form a proper judgment of the *method*, which some of the most admired of the antients, as well as moderns, have taken in this *work of criticizing*. The most eminent, at least the most popular, are, perhaps, Longinus, of the Greeks; P. Bouhours, of the French; and Mr. Addison, with us in England.

1. All the beautiful passages, which LONGINUS cites, are referred by him to *five* general classes. And, 2dly, These general classes belong all to the *common* principle of *sublimity*. He does not say this passage is *excellent*, but assigns the *kind* of excellence, *viz. sublimity*. Neither does he content himself with the general notion of *sublimity*, but names the *species*, *viz. Grandeur of sentiment*,



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ment, power of moving the *passions*, &c. His work therefore enables us to *class* our perceptions of excellence, and consequently is formed on the *true plan* of criticism.

2. The same may be observed of P. BOUHOURS. The passages, cited by him, are never mentioned in *general* terms as *good* or *bad*: but are instances of good or bad *sentiment*. This is the *genus*, in which *all* his instances are comprehended: but of this genus he marks also the distinct *species*. He does not say, this sentiment is *good*; but it is *sublime*, or *natural*, or *beautiful*, or *delicate*: or, that another sentiment is *bad*; but that it is *mean*, or *false*, or *deformed*, or *affected*. To these several classes he refers his particular instances: and these classes themselves are referred to the more comprehensive principles of the excellence or fault of *single sentiment*, as opposed to the various *other* excellences and faults, which are observed in composition.

3. Mr. ADDISON, in his *criticism on Milton*, proceeded in like manner. For, *first*, these remarks are evidently applicable to the general observations on the poem; in which every thing is referred to the common heads of *fable*, *morals*, *sentiments*, and *language*; and even the *specific* excellences and faults considered under each head distinctly marked out. *Secondly*, The same is true concerning *many* of the observations on particular

particular passages. The reader is not only told, that a passage *has* merit; but is informed what *sort* of merit belongs to it.

Neither are the remaining observations wholly without use. For such particular beauties and blemishes, as are barely *collected*, may yet serve as a foundation to future enquirers for making further discoveries. They may be considered as so many *single* facts, an *attention* to which is excited by the authority of the critic; and when these are considered jointly with such as *others* may have observed, those general principles of *similitude* may at length be found, which shall enable us to constitute *new* classes of poetical merit or blame.

Thus far the candid reader may go in apologizing for the *merits* of these writers. But as, in sound criticism, candour must not be indulged at the expence of *justice*, I think myself obliged to add an observation concerning their *defects*; and *that*, on what I must think the just principles here delivered.

Though the method, taken by these writers, be *scientific*, the real service they have done to criticism is not very considerable. And the reason is, they dwell too much in *generals*: that is, not only the *genus*, to which they refer their *species*, is too large, but those very subordinate species themselves are too comprehensive.

Of

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Of the *three* critics, under consideration, the most instructive is, unquestionably, *Longinus*. The *genus* itself, under which he ranks his several *classes*, is as *particular*, as the species of the other two. Yet even *his* classes are much too general to convey any very distinct and useful information. It had been still better, if this fine critic had descended to lower and more minute *particularities*, as subordinate to *each class*. For to observe of any *sentiment*, that it is *grand*, or *pathetic*, and so of the other *species* of sublime, is saying very little. Few readers want to be informed of this. It had been sufficient, if any notice was to be taken at all of so *general* beauties, to have done it in the way, which some of the best critics have taken, of merely pointing to them. But could he have discovered, and produced to observation, those *peculiar* qualities in *sentiment*, which occasion the impression of *grandeur*, *pathos*, &c. this had been advancing the science of criticism very much, as tending to lay open the more secret and hidden springs of that *pleasure*, which results from poetical composition.

*P. Bouhours*, as I observed, is still more faulty. His very *species* are so large, as make his criticism almost wholly useless and insignificant.

It gives one pain to refuse to such a writer, as Mr. *Addison*, any *kind* of merit, which he ap-

pears to have valued himself upon, and which the generality of his readers have seemed willing to allow him. Yet it must not be dissembled, that *criticism* was by no means his talent. His taste was truly elegant; but he had neither that vigour of understanding, nor chastised, philosophical spirit, which are so essential to this character, and which we find in hardly any of the antients besides Aristotle, and but in a very few of the moderns. For what concerns his *criticism on Milton* in particular, there was this accidental benefit arising from it, that it occasioned an admirable poet to be read, and his excellencies to be observed. But for the merit of the work itself, if there be any thing just in the *plan*, it was, because Aristotle and Bossu had taken the same route before him. And as to his *own* proper observations, they are for the most part so general and indeterminate, as to afford but little instruction to the reader, and are, not unfrequently, altogether frivolous. They are of a kind with those, in which the French critics (for I had rather instance in the defects of *foreign* writers than of our *own*) so much abound; and which good judges agree to rank in the worst sort of criticism. To give one example for all.

Cardinal PERRON, taking occasion to commend certain pieces of the poet RONSARD,  
chuses

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chuses to deliver himself in the following manners : “ Prenez de lui quelque poëme que ce soit, il paye toujours son lecteur, et quand là verve le prend, il se guinde en haut, il vous porte jusques dans les nuës, il vous fait voir mille belles choses.

“ Que ses *saisons* sont *bien-faites* ! Que la description de la lyre a Bertaut est *admirable* ! “ Que le discours au ministre, *excellent* ! Tous ses hymnes sont *beaux*. Celui de l'éternité est *admirable* ; ceux des saisons *marveilleux*.” [Perroniana.]

What now has the reader learned from this varied criticism, but that his *Eminence* was indeed very fond of his poet ; and that he esteemed these several pieces to be (what with less expence of words he might, in one breath, have called them) *well-turned, beautiful, excellent, admirable, marvellous*, poems ? To have given us the true character of *each*, and to have marked the precise *degree*, as well as *kind*, of merit in these works, had been a task of another nature.

### 211. — QUI PECTUS INANITER ANGIT.]

The word *inaniter*, as well as *falsi*, applied in the following line to *terrores*, would express that wondrous force of *dramatic representation*, which compels us to take part in *feigned* adventures and situations, as if they were *real* ; and exer-

cises the passions with the same violence, in *remote fancied scenes*, as in the *present distresses of real life*.

And this is that sovereign quality in poetry, which, as an old writer of our own naturally expresses it, is of force *to hold children from play, and old men from the chimney corner* [s]. The poet, in the place before us, considers it as a kind of *magic virtue*, which transports the spectator into all *places*, and makes him, occasionally, assume all *persons*. The resemblance holds, also, in this, that its effects are instantaneous and irresistible. *Rules, art, decorum*, all fall before it. It goes directly to the *heart*, and gains all purposes at once. Hence it is, that, speaking of a real genius, possessed of this commanding power, Horace pronounces him, emphatically, THE POET,

*Ille per extantum funem mihi posse videtur*

*Ire* POETA :

it being more especially this property, which, of itself, discovers the *true dramatist*, and secures the success of his performance, not only without the assistance of *art*, but in direct opposition to its clearest dictates.

This power has been felt on a thousand other occasions. But its triumphs were never more

[s] Sir Philip Sidney.

conspicuous,



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conspicuous, than in the famous instance of the *CID* of P. Corneille; which, by the sole means of this enchanting quality, drew along with it the affections and applauses of a whole people; notwithstanding the manifest transgression of some essential rules, the utmost tyranny of jealous power, and, what is more, in defiance of all the authority, and good sense of one of the justest pieces of criticism in the French language, written purposely to discredit and expose it.

224. CUM LAMENTAMUR NON ADPARERE LABORES NOSTROS, &c.] It was remarked upon line 211, that the beauties of a poem can only *appear* by being felt. And *they*, to whom they do not appear in this instance, are the writer's own *friends*, who, it is not to be supposed, would disguise their *feelings*. So that the *lamentation*, here spoken of, is at once a proof of *impertinence* in the poet, and of the *badness* of his poetry, which sets the complainant in a very ridiculous light.

228. EGERE VETES.] The poet intended, in these words, a very just satire on those presuming *wits and scholars*, who, under the pretence of getting above distressful *want*, in reality aspire to public honours and preferments; though

this be the most inexcusable of all follies (to give it the softest name), which can infect a man of letters: Both, because experience, on which a wise man would chuse to regulate himself, is contrary to these hopes; and because, if literary merit could succeed in them, the *reward*, as the poet speaks,

*would either bring*

*No joy, or be destructive of the thing:*

That is, the learned would either have no relish for the delights of so widely different a situation; or, which hath oftener been the case, would lose the learning itself, or the *love* of it at least, on which their pretensions to this *reward* are founded.

232. GRATUS ALEXANDRO REGI MAGNO, &c.] This praise of Augustus, arising from the comparison of his character with that of Alexander, is extremely fine. It had been observed of the Macedonian by his historians and panegyrist, that, to the stern virtues of the *conqueror*, he had joined the softer accomplishments of the *virtuoso*, in a just discernment and love of *poetry*, and of the *elegant arts*. The one was thought clear, from his admiration and study of Homer: And the *other*, from his famous edict concerning Apelles and Lyfippus, could not be denied. Horace finds means to turn both these circumstances

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circumstances in his story to the advantage of his prince.

From his extravagant pay of such a wretched versifier as *Choerilus*, he would insinuate, that Alexander's love of the muse was, in fact, but a blind unintelligent impulse towards *glory*. And from his greater skill in the arts of *sculpture* and *painting*, than of *verse*, he represents him as more concerned about the *drawing* of his figure, than the *pourtraiture* of his *manners and mind*. Whereas Augustus, by his liberalities to *Varius* and *Virgil*, had discovered the truest taste in the *art*, from which he expected immortality : and, in trusting to *that*, as the *chief* instrument of his fame, had confessed a prior regard to those *mental virtues*, which are the real ornament of humanity, before that *look of terror*, and *air and attitude of victory*, in which the brute violence of Alexander most delighted to be shewn,

243. MUSARUM DONA.] The expression is happy ; as implying, that these *images* of virtue, which are represented as of such importance to the glory of princes, are not the mere *offerings* of poetry to greatness, but the *free-gifts* of the muse to the poet. For it is only to such *works*, as these, that Horace attributes the wondrous efficacy of expressing the *manners and mind* in

fuller and more durable relief, than *sculpture* gives to the *exterior figure*.

*Non magis expressi vultus per aënea signa,  
Quam per vatis opus mores animique virorum  
Clarorum adparent.*

247.—VIRGILIUS.] Virgil is mentioned, in this place, simply as a *poet*. The precise idea of his *poetry* is given us elsewhere.

*molle atque facetum*

*Virgilio annuerunt gaudentes rure Camænae.*

[1 Sat. x. 44.

But this may appear a strange praise of the sweet and polished Virgil. It may appear so to Quintilian, who cites this passage, and explains it, without doubt, very justly, yet in such a way as shews that he was not quite certain of the truth of his explanation.

The case, I believe, was this. The word *facetum*, which makes the difficulty, had acquired, in Quintilian's days, the sense of *pleasant*, *witty*, or *facetious*, in *exclusion* to every other idea, which had formerly belonged to it. It is true that, in the Augustan age, and still earlier, *facetum* was sometimes used in this sense. But its proper and original meaning was no more than *exact*, *facilitatum*, *benè factum*. And in this strict sense, I believe, it is always used by Horace.

*Malbinius*

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*Malthinus tunicis demissis ambulat : est qui  
Inguen ad obscœnum subduclis usque facetus.*

1 Sat. II. 25,

i. e. tucked up, trim, expedite.

*Mutatis tantum pedibus numerisque facetus.*

1 Sat. IV. 7.

i. e. he [Lucilius] adopted a *stricter* measure, than the writers of the old comedy ; or, by changing the loose iambic to the hexameter verse, he gave a proof his *art*, *skill*, and *improved judgment*.

*frater, pater, adde ;*

*Ut cuique est ætas, ita quemque facetus adopta.*

1 Ep. VI. 55.

i. e. *nicely* and *accurately* adapt your address to the age and condition of each.

I do not recollect any other place where *facetus* is used by Horace ; and in all these it seems probable to me that the principal idea, conveyed by it, is that of *care*, *art*, *skill*, only differently modified according to the subject to which it is applied : a gown tucked up *with care*—a measure *studiously* affected—an address *nicely* accommodated—No thought of *ridicule* or *pleasantry* intended.

It is the same in the present instance—

MOLLE ATQUE FACETUM,

i. e.

i. e. a *soft flowing versification*, and an *exquisitely finished expression*: the two precise, characteristic merits of Virgil's *rural* poetry.

This change, in the sense of words, is common in all languages, and creeps in so gradually and imperceptibly as to elude the notice, sometimes, of the best critics, even in their own language. The transition of ideas, in the present instance, may be traced thus. As what was *wittily* said, was most *studied*, *artificial*, and *exquisite*; hence in process of time *facetum* lost its primary sense, and came to signify merely, *witty*.

We have a like example in our own language. A *good wit* meant formerly a man of good natural sense and understanding: but because what we now call *wit* was observed to be the flower and quintessence, as it were, of good sense, hence a *man of wit* is now the exclusive attribute of one who exerts his good sense in that peculiar manner.

247. DILECTI TIBI VIRGILIUS, &c.] It does honour to the memory of Augustus, that he bore the *affection*, here spoken of, to this amiable poet; who was not more distinguished from his contemporary writers by the force of an original, inventive genius, than the singular benevolence and humanity of his character. Yet there



## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 123

there have been critics of so perverse a turn, as to discover an inclination, at least, of disputing both.

1. Some have taken offence at his supposed unfriendly neglect of Horace, who, on every occasion, shewed himself so ready to lavish all his praises on him. But the folly of this slander is of a piece with its malignity, as proceeding on the absurd fancy, that Virgil's friends might as easily have slid into such works, as the *Georgics* and *Eneïs*, as those of Horace into the various occasional poems, which employed his pen.

Just such another senseless suspicion hath been raised of his jealousy of Homer's superior glory (a vice, from which the nature of the great poet was singularly abhorrent), only because he did not think fit to give him the first place among the poets in *Elysium*, several hundred years before he had so much as made his appearance upon earth.

But these petty calumnies of his *moral* character hardly deserve a confutation. What some greater authorities have objected to his *poetical*, may be thought more serious. For,

2. It has been given out by some of better note among the moderns, and from thence, according to the customary influence of authority, hath become the prevailing sentiment of the generality

generality of the learned, that the great poet was more indebted for his fame to the *exactness of his judgment; to his industry, and a certain trick of imitation*, than to the energy of natural genius; which he is thought to have possessed in a very slender degree.

This charge is founded on the similitude, which all acknowledge, betwixt his great work, the *Aeneis*, and the poems of Homer. But, “how far such similitude infers imitation; or, “how far imitation itself infers an inferiority “of natural genius in the imitator,” this hath never been considered. In short, the affair of *imitation* in poetry, though one of the most curious and interesting in all criticism, hath been, hitherto, very little understood: as may appear from hence, that there is not, as far as I can learn, one single treatise, now extant, written purposely to explain it; the discourse, which the learned *Menage* intended, and which, doubtless, would have given light to this matter, having never, as I know of, been made public. To supply, in some measure, this loss, I have thought it not amiss to put together, and methodize a few reflexions of my own on this subject, which (because the matter is large, and cannot easily be drawn into a compass that suits with the nature of these occasional remarks)

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## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 125

the reader will find in a distinct and separate dissertation upon it [1].

### CONCLUSION.

AND, now, having explained, in the best manner I could, the two famous Epistles of Horace to Augustus and the Pisos, it may be expected, in conclusion, that I should say something of the rest of our poet's critical writings. For his *Sermones* (under which general term I include his *Epistles*) are of two sorts, MORAL and CRITICAL; and, though both are exquisite, the *latter* are, perhaps, in their kind, the more perfect of the two; his *moral* principles being sometimes, I believe, liable to exception; his *critical*, never.

The two pieces, illustrated in these volumes, are *strictly* critical: the *first*, being a professed criticism of the Roman drama; and the *last*, in order to their vindication, of the Roman poets. The rest of his works, which turn upon this subject of criticism, may be rather termed *Apologetical*. They are the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of the FIRST, and 1<sup>st</sup> of the SECOND book of Satires;

[1] Diss. III. in the third Volume.

and

## 126 NOTES ON THE

and the XIX<sup>th</sup> of the FIRST, and, in part, the II<sup>d</sup> of the SECOND book of Epistles.

In *these*, the poet has THREE great objects; one or other of which he never loses sight of, and generally he prosecutes them all together, in the same piece. These objects are, 1. to vindicate the way of writing in satire. 2. To justify his opinion of a favourite writer of this class, the celebrated Lucilius. And, 3. to expose the careless and incorrect composition of the Roman writers.

He was himself deeply concerned in these three articles; so that he makes his own apology at the same time that he criticizes or censures others. The *address* of the poet's manner will be seen by bearing in mind this general purpose of his critical poetry. How he came to be *engaged* in this controversy, will best appear from a few observations on the state of the Roman learning, when he undertook to contribute his pains to the improvement of it.

I have, in the introduction to the first of these volumes, given a slight sketch of the rise and progress of the Roman satire. This poem was purely of Roman invention: *first of all* struck out of the old fescennine farce, and rudely cultivated, by Ennius: *Next*, more happily treated, and enriched with the best part of  
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## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 127

the old comedy, by Lucilius: And, after some succeeding essays, taken up and finally adorned, by Horace.

HORACE was well known to the public by his lyric compositions, and still more perhaps by his favour at court, when he took upon him to correct the manners and taste of his age, by his *Lucilian Satires*. But, here, he encountered, at once, many prejudices; and all his own credit, together with that of his court-friends, was little enough to support him, against the torrent.

FIRST, the kind of writing itself was sure to give offence. For, though men were well enough pleased to have their natural malignity gratified by an old poet's satire against a former age, yet they were naturally alarmed at the exercise of this talent upon their *own*, and, as it might chance, upon themselves.

The poet's eminence, and favour, would, besides, give a peculiar force and effect to his censures; so that all who found, or thought themselves liable to them, were concerned, in interest, to discredit the attempt, and blast his rising reputation.

*Omnes hi metuunt versus, odere POETAM.*

Hence, he was constrained to stand upon his own defence, and to vindicate, as well the  
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thing itself, as his management of it, to the tender and suspicious public.

But this was not all : For, SECONDLY, an old satirist, of high birth and quality, LUCILIUS, was considered, not only as an able writer of this class, but as a perfect model in it ; and of course, therefore, this new satirist would be much decried and undervalued, on the comparison. This circumstance obliged the poet to reduce this admired writer to his real value ; which could not be done without thwarting the general admiration, and pointing out his vices and defects in the freest manner. This perilous task he discharged in the iv<sup>th</sup> satire of his first book, and with such rigour of criticism, that not only the partizans of Lucilius in the poet's own age, but the most knowing and candid critics of succeeding times, were disposed to complain of it. However, the obnoxious step had been taken ; and nothing remained but to justify himself, as he hath done at large, in his x<sup>th</sup> satire.

On the whole, in comparing what he has said in these two satires with what Quintilian long after observed on the subject of them, there seems no reason to conclude, that the poet judged ill : though he expressed his judgment in such terms as he would, no doubt, have something



thing softened (out of complaisance to the general sentiment, and a becoming deference to the real merits of his master), if his adversaries had been more moderate in urging their charge, or if the occasion had not been so pressing.

*Lastly*, this attack on Lucilius produced, or rather involved in it, a THIRD quarrel. The poet's main objection to Lucilius was his careless, verbose, and hasty composition, which his admirers, no doubt, called genius, grace, and strength. This being an inveterate folly among his countrymen, he gives it no quarter. Through all his critical works, he employs the utmost force of his wit and good sense to expose it: And his own writings, being at the same time supremely correct, afforded his enemies (which would provoke them still more) no advantage against him. Yet they attempted, as they could, to repay his perpetual reproaches on the popular writers for their neglect of *limae labor*, by objecting to him, in their turn, that what he wrote was *sine nervis*: and this, though they felt his *force* themselves, and though another set of men were complaining, at the same time, of his *severity*,

*Sunt quibus in satyrâ videor nimis ACER—*

SINE NERVIS altera quicquid

*Composui pars esse putat, similesque meorum*

*Mille die versus deduci posse —*

VOL. II.

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His

His detractors satirically alluding, in these last words, to his charge against Lucilius —

in horâ sæpè ducentos,  
*Ut magnum, versus dictabat, stans pede in uno.*

It is not my purpose, in this place, to enlarge further on the character of Lucilius, whose *wordy* satires gave occasion to our poet's criticism. Several of the antient writers speak of him occasionally, in terms of the highest applause; and without doubt, he was a poet of distinguished merit. Yet it will hardly be thought, at this day, that it could be any discredit to him to be censured, rivalled, and excelled by Horace.

What I have here put together is only to furnish the young reader with the proper KEY to Horace's critical works, which generally turn on his own vindication, *against the enemies of satire — the admirers of Lucilius — and the patrons of loose and incorrect composition.*

In managing these several topics, he has found means to introduce a great deal of exquisite criticism. And though his scattered observations go but a little way towards making up a complete critical system, yet they are so *luminous*, as the French speak, that is, they are so replete with good sense, and extend so much farther than to the case to which they are immediately

## EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS. 131

mediately applied, that they furnish many of the principles on which such a system, if ever it be taken in hand, must be constructed: And, without carrying matters too far, we may safely affirm of these *Critical Discourses*, that, next to Aristotle's immortal work, they are the most valuable remains of antient art upon this subject.

*The End of the Notes on the Epistle to AUGUSTUS.*



## CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS.

- I. ON THE IDEA OF UNIVERSAL POETRY.
- II. ON THE PROVINCES OF DRAMATIC POETRY.
- III. ON POETICAL IMITATION.
- IV. ON THE MARKS OF IMITATION.

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VATIEVS ADDERE CALCAR,  
VT STVDIO MAIORE PETANT HELICONA VIRENTEN.  
HOR.

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CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS

- ON THE IDEA OF UNIVERSAL FORM
- ON THE NATURE OF CAUSALITY
- ON THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE
- ON THE NATURE OF IMITATION

BY JAMES H. CAMPBELL  
PH.D. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
1911



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# DISSERTATION I.

O N

## THE IDEA OF UNIVERSAL POETRY.

**W**HEN we speak of poetry, as an *art*, we mean *such a way or method of treating a subject, as is found most pleasing and delightful to us*. In all other kinds of literary composition, pleasure is subordinate to USE: in poetry only, PLEASURE is the end, to which use itself (however it be, for certain reasons, always pretended) must submit.

This *idea* of the end of poetry is no novel one, but indeed the very same which our great philosopher entertained of it; who gives it as the essential note of this part of learning — THAT IT SUBMITS THE SHEWS OF THINGS TO THE DESIRES OF THE MIND: WHEREAS REASON DOTH BUCKLE AND BOW THE MIND UNTO THE

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NATURE

NATURE OF THINGS. For to *gratify the desires of the mind*, is to PLEASE: *Pleasure* then, in the idea of Lord Bacon, is the ultimate and appropriate end of poetry; for the sake of which it accommodates itself to *the desires of the mind*, and doth not (as other kinds of writing, which are under the controul of *reason*) *buckle and bow the mind to the nature of things*.

But they, who like a principle the better for seeing it in Greek, may take it in the words of an old philosopher, ERATOSTHENES, who affirmed — *πᾶν τὸν πᾶντα σοχαῖσθαι ψυχαγωγίας, ἔδιδασκαλίας* — of which words, the definition given above, is the translation.

This *notion* of the end of poetry, if kept steadily in view, will unfold to us all the mysteries of the poetic art. There needs but to evolve the philosopher's idea, and to apply it, as occasion serves. *The art of poetry* will be, universally, THE ART OF PLEASING; and all its *rules*, but so many MEANS, which experience finds most conducive to that end;

Sic

Sic ANIMIS natum inventumque pœma JUVANDIS.

Aristotle has delivered and explained these rules, so far as they respect one species of poetry, the *dramatic*, or, more properly speaking, the *tragic*: And when such a writer, as he, shall do as much by the other species, then, and not till then, a complete ART OF POETRY will be formed.

I have not the presumption to think myself, in any degree, equal to this arduous task: But from the idea of this art, as given above, an ordinary writer may undertake to deduce some general conclusions, concerning *Universal Poetry*, which seem preparatory to those nicer disquisitions, concerning its *several sorts or species*.

I. It follows from that IDEA, that it should neglect no advantage, that fairly offers itself, of appearing in such a dress or mode of language, as is most *taking* and agreeable to us. We may expect then, in the language or style of poetry, a choice of such words as are most sonorous and expressive, and such an arrangement of them

them as throws the discourse out of the ordinary and common phrase of conversation. Novelty and variety are certain sources of pleasure: a construction of words, which is not vulgar, is therefore more suited to the ends of poetry, than one which we are every day accustomed to in familiar discourse. Some manners of placing them are, also, more agreeable to the ear, than others: Poetry, then, is studious of these, as it would by all means, not manifestly absurd, give pleasure: And hence a certain musical cadence, or what we call *Rhythm*, will be affected by the poet.

But, of all the means of adorning and enlivening a discourse by words, which are infinite, and perpetually grow upon us, as our knowledge of the tongue in which we write, and our skill in adapting it to the ends of poetry, increases, there is none that pleases more, than *figurative expression*.

By *figurative expression*, I would be understood to mean, here, that which respects *the pictures or images of things*. And this sort of figurative expression is universally pleasing

pleasing to us, because it tends to impress on the mind the most distinct and vivid conceptions; and truth of representation being of less account in this way of composition, than the liveliness of it, poetry, as such, will delight in tropes and figures, and those the most strongly and forceably expressed. And though the *application* of figures will admit of great variety, according to the nature of the subject, and the *management* of them must be suited to the taste and apprehension of the people to whom they are addressed, yet, in some way or other, they will find a place in all works of poetry; and they who object to the use of them, only shew that they are not capable of being pleased by this sort of composition, or do, in effect, interdict the thing itself.

The antients looked for so much of this force and spirit of expression in whatever they dignified with the name of *poem*, that Horace tells us it was made a question by some, whether comedy were rightly referred to this class, because it differed only in point of measure from mere prose.

Idcirco

Idcirco quidam, comoedia necne poema  
 Effet, quacivere : quod acer spiritus, ac vis,  
 Nec *verbis*, nec rebus inest : nisi quod pede certo  
 Differt sermoni, sermo merus— Sat. l. I. iv.

But they might have spared their doubt, or at least have resolved it, if they had considered that comedy adopts as much of this *force and spirit of words*, as is consistent with the *nature and degree* of that pleasure, which it pretends to give. For the name of poem will belong to every composition, whose primary end is to *please*, provided it be so constructed as to afford *all* the pleasure, which its kind or *sort* will permit.

II. From the idea of the *end* of poetry, it follows, that not only figurative and tropical terms will be employed in it, as *these*, by the images they convey, and by the air of novelty which such indirect ways of speaking carry with them, are found most delightful to us, but also that FICTION, in the largest sense of the word, is essential to poetry. For its purpose is, not to delineate truth simply, but to present it in the most taking forms ; not to reflect the  
 real



real face of things, but to illustrate and adorn it; not to represent the fairest objects only, but to represent them in the fairest lights, and to heighten all their beauties up to the possibility of their natures; nay, to *outstrip* nature, and to address itself to our wildest fancy, rather than to our judgement and cooler sense.

Οὐτ' ἐπιδερνῶ τὰδ' ἀνδράσιν, ἔτ' ἐπακυσά,  
Οὔτε νόῳ περίληπτα—

as sings one of the profession [*a*], who seems to have understood his privileges very well.

For there is something in the mind of man, sublime and elevated, which prompts it to overlook all obvious and familiar appearances, and to feign to itself other and more extraordinary; such as correspond to the extent of its own powers, and fill out all the faculties and capacities of our souls. This restless and aspiring disposition, poetry, first and principally, would indulge and flatter; and thence takes its name of *divine*, as if some power, above

[*a*] Empedocles. See Plutarch, vol. i. p. 15. Par. 1624.

*human,*

*human*, conspired to lift the mind to these exalted conceptions.

Hence it comes to pass, that it deals in apostrophes and invocations; that it impersonates the virtues and vices; peoples all creation with new and living forms; calls up infernal spectres to terrify, or brings down celestial natures to astonish, the imagination; assembles, combines, or connects its ideas, at pleasure; in short, prefers not only the agreeable and the graceful, but, as occasion calls upon her, the vast, the incredible, I had almost said, the impossible, to the obvious truth and nature of things. For all this is but a feeble expression of that magic virtue of poetry, which our Shakespeare has so forcibly described in those well-known lines —

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rowling,  
Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth  
to heav'n;

And, as Imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shape, and gives to aery nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

When

When the received system of manners or religion in any country, happens to be so constituted as to suit itself in some degree to this extravagant turn of the human mind, we may expect that poetry will seize it with avidity, will dilate upon it with pleasure, and take a pride to erect its specious wonders on so proper and convenient a ground. Whence it cannot seem strange that, of all the forms in which poetry has appeared, that of *pagan fable*, and *gotbic romance*, should, in their turns, be found the most alluring to the true poet. For, in defect of these advantages, he will ever adventure, in some sort, to supply their place with others of his own invention; that is, he will mould every system, and convert every subject, into the most amazing and miraculous form.

And this is that I would say, at present, of these two requisites of universal poetry, namely, *that licence of expression*, which we call the *style* of poetry, and *that licence of representation*, which we call *fiction*. The *style* is, as it were, the body of poetry; *fiction*, is its soul. Having, thus, taken the  
privilege

privilege of a poet to create a Muse, we have only now to give her a voice, or more properly to *tune* it, and then she will be in a condition, as one of her favourites speaks, TO RAVISH ALL THE GODS. For

III. It follows from the same idea of the *end*, which poetry would accomplish, that not only Rhythm, but NUMBERS, properly so called, is essential to it. For this Art undertaking to gratify all those desires and expectations of pleasure, that can be reasonably entertained by us; and there being a capacity in language, the instrument it works by, of pleasing us very highly, not only by the sense and imagery it conveys, but by the structure of words, and still more by the harmonious arrangement of them in metrical sounds or numbers, and lastly there being no reason in the nature of the thing itself why these pleasures should not be united, it follows that poetry will not be that which it professes to be, that is, will not accomplish its own purpose, unless it delight the ear with numbers, or, in other words, unless it be clothed in VERSE.

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The reader, I dare say, has hitherto gone along with me, in this deduction: but here, I suspect, we shall separate. Yet he will startle the less at this conclusion, if he reflect on the origin and first application of poetry among all nations.

It is every where of the most early growth, preceding every other sort of composition; and being destined for the *ear*, that is, to be either sung, or at least recited, it adapts itself, even in its first rude essays, to that sense of measure and proportion in sounds, which is so natural to us. The hearer's attention is the sooner gained by this means, his entertainment quickened, and his admiration of the performer's art excited. Men are ambitious of pleasing, and ingenious in refining upon what they observe will please. So that musical cadences and harmonious sounds, which nature dictated, are farther softened and improved by art, till poetry become as ravishing to the ear, as the images, it presents, are to the imagination. In process of time, what was at first the extemporaneous production of genius or passion, under

whose honour the great Geographer would assert, in his criticism on Eratosthenes) frequently *instruct us* by a true and faithful representation of things; yet even this instructive air is only assumed for the sake of *pleasing*; which, as the human mind is constituted, they could not so well do, if they did not instruct at all, that is, if *truth* were wholly neglected by them. So that *pleasure* is still the ultimate end and *scope* of the poet's art; and *instruction* itself is, in his hands, only one of the *means*, by which he would effect it [b].

I am the larger on this head, to shew that it is not a mere verbal dispute, as it is commonly thought, whether poems should be written in verse, or no. Men may include, or not include, the idea of metre in their complex idea of what they call a *Poem*. What I contend for, is, that *metre*, as an instrument of *pleasing*, is essential to every work of poetic art, and would therefore enter into such idea, if men judged of poetry according to its confessed *nature and end*.

[b] See STRABO, l. l. p. 15. Par. 1620.

Whence



Whence it may seem a little strange, that my Lord Bacon should speak of *poesy as a part of learning in measure of words* FOR THE MOST PART *restrained*; when his own notion, as we have seen above, was, that the essence of poetry consisted in *submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind*. For these *shews of things* could only be exhibited to the mind through the *medium of words*: and it is just as natural for the mind to desire that these words should be *harmonious*, as that the images, conveyed in them, should be *illustrious*; there being a capacity in the mind of being delighted through its organ, the *ear*, as well as through its power, or faculty of *imagination*. And the wonder is the greater, because the great philosopher himself was aware of *the agreement and consort which poetry hath with music*, as well as *with man's nature and pleasure*, that is, with the pleasure which naturally results from gratifying the imagination. So that, to be consistent with himself, he should, methinks, have said—*that poesy was a part of learning in measure of words*.

become a standing law of the tragic stage. For this, as every other poem, being calculated and designed properly and ultimately to *please*, whatever contributes to produce that end most perfectly, all circumstances taken into the account, must be thought of the nature or essence of the kind.

But, without carrying matters so far, let us confine our attention to metre, or what we call *verse*. This must be essential to every work bearing the name of *poem*, not, because we are only accustomed to call works written in verse, *poems*, but because a work, which professes to please us by every possible and proper method, and yet does not give us this pleasure, which it is in its power, and is no way improper for it, to give, must so far fall short of fulfilling its own engagements to us; that is, it has not all those qualities which we have a right to expect in a work of literary art, of which *pleasure* is the ultimate end.

To explain myself by an obvious instance. History undertakes to INSTRUCT us in the transactions of past times. If it answer

swer this purpose, it does all that is of *its nature*; and, if it find means to *please* us, besides, by the harmony of its style, and vivacity of its narration, all this is to be accounted as pure gain: if it instruct ONLY, by the truth of its reports, and the perspicuity of its method, it would fully attain its *end*. Poetry, on the other hand, undertakes to PLEASE. If it employ all its powers to this purpose, it effects all that is of *its nature*: if it serve, besides, to inform or instruct us, by the truths it conveys, and by the precepts or examples it inculcates, this service may rather be accepted, than required by us: if it pleased ONLY, by its ingenious fictions, and harmonious structure, it would discharge its office, and answer its *end*.

In this sense, the famous saying of Eratosthenes, quoted above—*that the poet's aim is to please, not to instruct*—is to be understood: nor does it appear, what reason Strabo could have to take offence at it; however it might be misapplied, as he tells us it was, by that writer. For, though the poets, no doubt (and especially THE POET,

the conduct of a *natural ear*, becomes the labour of the closet, and is conducted by artificial rules; 'yet still, with a secret reference to the *sense* of hearing, and to that acceptation which melodious sounds meet with in the recital of expressive words.

Even the prose-writer (when the art is enough advanced to produce prose) having been accustomed to have his ear consulted and gratified by the poet, catches insensibly the same harmonious affection, tunes his sentences and periods to some agreement with song, and transfers into his coolest narrative, or gravest instruction, something of that music, with which his ear vibrates from poetic impressions.

In short, he leaves measured and determinate numbers, that is, METRE, to the poet, who is to please up to the height of his faculties, and the nature of his work; and only reserves to himself, whose purpose of giving pleasure is subordinate to another end, the looser musical measure, or what we call RHYTHMICAL PROSE.

The reason appears, from this deduction, why *all* poetry aspires to please by melodious

dious numbers. To *some* species it is thought more essential, than to others, because those species continue to be *sung*, that is, are more immediately addressed to the ear; and because they continue to be sung in concert with *musical instruments*, by which the ear is still more indulged. It happened in antient Greece, that even tragedy retained this accompaniment of musical instruments, through all its stages, and even in its most improved state. Whence Aristotle includes *music*, properly so called, as well as *Rhythm* and *Metre*, in his idea of the tragic poem. He did this, because he found the drama of his country, OMNIBUS NUMERIS ABSOLUTUM, I mean in possession of all the advantages which could result from the union of *rhythmical*, *metrical*, and *musical* sounds. Modern tragedy has relinquished part of these; yet still, if it be true that this poem be more pleasing by the addition of the *musical* art, and there be nothing in the nature of the composition which forbids the use of it, I know not why Aristotle's idea should not be adopted, and his precept

ALWAYS *restrained*; such *poesy*, as, through the idleness or negligence of writers, is not so restrained, not agreeing to his own idea of *this part of learning* [c].

These reflexions will afford a proper solution of that question, which has been agitated by the critics, "Whether a work of fiction and imagination (such as that of the archbishop of Cambray, for instance) conducted, in other respects, according to the rules of the epic poem, but written in prose, may deserve the name of POEM, or not." For, though it be frivolous indeed to dispute about names, yet from what has been said it appears, that if metre be not incongruous to the nature of an epic composition, and it afford a pleasure which is not to be found in mere prose, metre is, for that reason, essential to this mode of writing; which is only saying in other words, that an epic composition, to give all the pleasure which it is capable of giving, must be written in *verse*.

[c] ADV. OF LEARNING, vol. i. p. 50. Dr Birch's Ed. 1765.

But,



But, secondly, this conclusion, I think, extends farther than to such works as aspire to the name of *epic*. For instance, what are we to think of those *novels* or *romances*, as they are called, that is, fables constructed on some private and familiar subject, which have been so current, of late, through all Europe? As they propose *pleasure* for their end, and prosecute it, besides, in the way of *fiction*, though without metrical numbers, and generally, indeed, in harsh and rugged prose, one easily sees what their pretensions are, and under what idea they are ambitious to be received. Yet, as they are wholly destitute of measured sounds (to say nothing of their other numberless defects) they can, at most, be considered but as hasty, imperfect, and abortive poems; whether spawned from the dramatic, or narrative species, it may be hard to say —

Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,  
Their generation's so equivocal.

However, such as they are, these *novelties* have been generally well received: *Some*, for the real merit of their execution;  
*Others*,

ful and harmonious than the French, may afford all the melody of sound which is expected in some sorts of poetry, by its *varied pause*, and *quantity* only; while in other sorts, which are more solicitous to please the ear, and where such solicitude, if taken notice of by the reader or hearer, is not resented, it may be proper, or rather it becomes a law of the English and Italian poetry, to adopt *rhyme*. Thus, our tragedies are usually composed in blank verse: but our epic and lyric compositions are found most pleasing, when cloathed in rhyme. Milton, I know, it will be said, is an exception: But, if we set aside some learned persons, who have suffered themselves to be too easily prejudiced by their admiration of the Greek and Latin languages, and still more, perhaps, by the prevailing notion of the monkish or gothic original of rhymed verse, all other readers, if left to themselves, would, I dare say, be more delighted with this poet, if, besides his various pause, and measured quantity, he had enriched his numbers, with *rhyme*. So that his love of liberty, the ruling passion

sion of his heart, perhaps transported him too far, when he chose to follow the example set him by one or two writers of *prima note* (to use his own eulogium), rather than comply with the regular and prevailing practice of his favoured Italy, which first and principally, as our best rhymist sings,

With pauses, cadence, and well-vowell'd words,  
And all the graces a good ear affords,

MADE RHYME AN ART—

Our comedy, indeed, is generally written in *prose*; but through the idleness, or ill taste, of our writers, rather than from any other just cause. For, though rhyme be not necessary, or rather would be improper, in the comedy of our language, which can support itself in poetic numbers, without the diligence of rhyme; yet some sort of metre is requisite in this humbler species of poem; otherwise, it will not contribute all that is within its power and province, to *please*. And the particular metre, proper for this species, is not far to seek. For it can plainly be no other than a careless and looser Iambic, such as our language naturally

are studiously avoided by good writers; while in others, as in all the modern ones, where these consonances are less frequent, and where the quantity of syllables is not so distinctly marked as, of itself, to afford an harmonious measure and musical variety, there it is of necessity that poets have had recourse to *Rhyme*; or to some other expedient of the like nature, such as the *Alliteration*, for instance; which is only another way of delighting the ear by iterated sound, and may be defined, *the consonance of initial letters*, as rhyme is, *the consonance of final syllables*. All this, I say, is of necessity, because what we call verses in such languages will be otherwise untuneful, and will not strike the ear with that vivacity, which is requisite to put a sensible difference between poetic numbers and measured prose.

In short, no method of gratifying the ear by *measured sound*, which experience has found pleasing, is to be neglected by the poet; and although, from the different structure and genius of languages, these methods will be different, the studious application

application of such methods, as each particular language allows, becomes a necessary part of his office. He will only cultivate those methods most, which tend to produce, in a given language, the most harmonious structure or measure, of which it is capable.

Hence it comes to pass, that the poetry of some modern languages cannot so much as subsist, without rhyme: In others, it is only embellished by it. Of the *former* sort is the French, which therefore adopts, and with good reason, rhymed verse, not in tragedy only, but in comedy: And though foreigners, who have a language differently constructed, are apt to treat this observance of rhyme as an idle affectation, yet it is but just to allow that the French themselves are the most competent judges of the natural defect of their own tongue, and the likeliest to perceive by what management such defect is best remedied or concealed.

In the *latter* class of languages, whose poetry is only embellished by the use of rhyme, we may reckon the Italian and the English: which being naturally more tune-  
ful

*Others*, for their amusing subjects; *All* of them, for the gratification they afford, or promise at least, to a vitiated, palled, and sickly imagination — that last disease of learned minds, and sure prognostic of expiring Letters. But whatever may be the temporary success of these things (for they vanish as fast as they are produced, and are produced as soon as they are conceived) good sense will acknowledge no work of art but such as is composed according to the laws of its *kind*. These *KINDS*, as arbitrary things as we account them (for I neither forget nor dispute what our best philosophy teaches concerning *kinds* and *sorts*), have yet so far their foundation in nature and the reason of things, that it will not be allowed us to multiply, or vary them, at pleasure. We may, indeed, mix and confound them, if we will (for there is a sort of literary luxury, which would engross all pleasures at once, even such as are contradictory to each other), or, in our rage for incessant gratification, we may take up with half-formed pleasures, such as come first to hand, and  
 may



may be administered by any body: But true taste requires chaste, severe, and simple pleasures; and true genius will only be concerned in administering such.

Lastly, on the same principle on which we have decided on these questions concerning the *absolute merits* of poems in prose, in *all* languages, we may, also, determine another, which has been put concerning the *comparative merits* of RHYMED, and what is called BLANK verse, in our *own*, and the other *modern* languages.

Critics and antiquaries have been solicitous to find out who were the inventors of rhyme, which some fetch from the Monks, some from the Goths, and others from the Arabians: whereas, the truth seems to be, that *rhyme*, or the consonance of final syllables, occurring at stated intervals, is the dictate of nature, or, as we may say, an appeal to the *ear*, in all languages, and in some degree pleasing in all. The difference is, that, in some languages, these consonances are apt of themselves to occur so often that they rather nauseate, than please, and so, instead of being affected,  
are

naturally runs into, even in conversation, and of which we are not without examples, in our old and best writers for the comic stage. But it is not wonderful that those critics, who take offence at English epic poems in *rhyme*, because the Greek and Latin only observed *quantity*, should require English comedies to be written in *prose*, though the Greek and Latin comedies were composed in *verse*. For the ill application of examples, and the neglect of them, may be well enough expected from the same men, since it does not appear that their judgment was employed, or the reason of the thing attended to, in either instance.

AND THUS much for the idea of UNIVERSAL POETRY. It is the art of treating any subject in *such* a way as is found most delightful to us; that is, IN AN ORNAMENTED AND NUMEROUS STYLE—IN THE WAY OF FICTION—AND IN VERSE. Whatever deserves the name of POEM must unite these three properties; only in different degrees of each, according to its nature. For the art of every *kind* of poetry

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poetry is only this general art so modified as the *nature* of each, that is, its more immediate and subordinate end, may respectively require.

We are now, then, at the well-head of the poetic art; and they who drink deeply of this spring, will be best qualified to perform the rest. But all heads are not equal to these copious draughts; and, besides, I hear the sober reader admonishing me long since —

Lusisti satis atque BIBISTI;  
Tempus abire tibi est, ne POTUM LARGIUS  
AEQUO  
Rideat, et pulset lasciva decentius AETAS.

THURCASTON,  
MDCCLXV.



## DISSERTATION II.

O N

## THE PROVINCES OF THE DRAMA.

I N the former Essay, I gave an idea, or slight sketch, of *Universal Poetry*. In this, I attempt to deduce the laws of one of its kinds, the *Dramatic*, under all its forms. And I engage in this task, the rather, because, though much has been said on the subject of the drama, writers seem not to have taken sufficient pains to distinguish, with exactness, its several species.

I deduce the laws of this poem, as I did those of poetry at large, from the consideration of its *end*: not the general end of poetry, which alone was proper to be considered in the former case, but the proximate end of this kind. For from these ends, in subordination to that, which governs the genus, or which all poetry, as

M 2

such,

such, designs and prosecutes, are the peculiar rules and maxims of each species to be derived.

THE PURPOSE OF THE DRAMA is, universally, "to represent human life in the way of *action*." But as such representation is made for separate and distinct ENDS, it is, further, distinguished into different species, which we know by the names of TRAGEDY, COMEDY, and FARCE.

By TRAGEDY, then, I mean that species of dramatic representation, whose end is "*to excite the passions of PITY and TERROR, and perhaps some others, nearly allied to them.*"

By COMEDY that, which proposeth, for the ends of its representation, "*the sensation of pleasure arising from a view of the truth of CHARACTERS, more especially their specific differences.*"

By FARCE I understand that species of the drama, "*whose sole aim and tendency is to excite LAUGHTER.*"

The idea of these three species being then proposed, let us now see, what conclusions may be drawn from it. And chiefly in respect



respect of *Tragedy* and *Comedy*, which are most important. For as to what concerns the province of *Farce*, this will be easily understood, when the character of the other two is once settled.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE PROVINCES OF TRAGEDY AND COMEDY.

FROM the idea of these two species, as given above, the following conclusions, about the *natures* of each are immediately deducible.

1. If the proper end of TRAGEDY be to *affect*, it follows, "that *actions*, not characters, are the chief object of its representations." For that which *affects* us most in the view of human life is the observation of those signal circumstances of *felicity* or *distress*, which occur in the fortunes of men. But *felicity* and *distress*, as the great critic takes notice, depend on *action*; καὶ τὰς πράξεις, εὐδαίμονες, ἢ ταραχάς. They are then the calamitous *events*, or fortunate *issues* in human action, which stir up the stronger *affections*, and agitate the

heart with *Passion*. The *manners* are not, indeed, to be neglected. But they become an inferior consideration in the views of the tragic poet, and are exhibited only for the sake of making the *action* more proper to interest us. Thus our *joy* on the *happy catastrophe* of the fable, depends, in a good degree, on the *virtuous character* of the agent; as, on the other hand, we sympathize more strongly with him, on a *distressful issue*. The *manners* of the several persons in the drama must, also, be signified, that the *action*, which in many cases will be determined by them, may appear to be carried on with *truth and probability*. Hence every thing passing before us, as we are accustomed to see it in real life, we enter more warmly into their interests, as forgetting, that we are attentive to a *fictitious scene*. And, besides, from knowing the personal *good or ill qualities* of the agents, we learn to anticipate their future *felicity or misery*, which gives increase to the *passion* in either case. Our acquaintance with IAGO's *close villainy* makes us tremble for Othello and Desdemona beforehand: and

HAMLET'S

HAMLET'S *filial piety and intrepid daring* occasion the audience secretly to exult in the *expectation* of some successful vengeance to be inflicted on the incestuous murderers.

2. For the same reason as tragedy takes for its *object* the actions of men, it, also, prefers, or rather confines itself to, such actions, as are most *important*. Which is only saying, that as it intends to *interest*, it, of course, chuses the representation of those *events*, which are most *interesting*.

And this shews the defect of modern tragedy, in turning so constantly as it does, on *love subjects*; the effect of this practice is, that, excepting only the rank of the actors (which indeed, as will be seen presently, is of considerable importance), the rest is below the dignity of this drama. For the *action*, when stripped of its accidental ornaments and reduced to the *essential fact*, is nothing more than what might as well have passed in a cottage, as a king's palace. The Greek poets should be our guides here, who take the very grandest events in their story to ennoble their tragedy.

dy. Whence it comes to pass that the *action*, having an essential dignity, is always *interesting*, and by the simplest management of the poet becomes in a supreme degree, *pathetic*.

3. On the same account, the *persons*, whose actions Tragedy would exhibit to us, must be of *principal rank and dignity*. For the actions of these are, both in *themselves* and in their *consequences*, most fitted to excite passion. The *distresses* of private and inferior persons will, no doubt, *affect* us greatly; and we may give the name of *tragedies*, if we please, to dramatic representations of them: as, in fact, we have several applauded pieces of this kind. Nay, it may seem, that the fortunes of private men, as more nearly resembling *those* of the generality, should be most *affecting*. But this circumstance in no degree makes amends for the loss of other and much greater *advantages*. For, whatever be the *unhappy incidents* in the story of private men, it is certain, they must take faster hold of the *imagination*, and, of course, impress the heart more forcibly, when related

lated of the higher characters in life.

Τῶν γὰρ μεγάλων ἀξιοπενθεῖς  
Φῆμαι μᾶλλον κατέχουσιν.

EURIP. HIPPOCRATES. 1434.

Kings, Heroes, Statesmen, and other persons of great and public authority, influence by their *ill-fortune* the whole community, to which they belong. The attention is roused, and all our faculties take an alarm, at the apprehension of such extensive and important wretchedness. And, besides, if we regard the *event* itself, without an eye to its *effects*, there is still the widest difference between the two cases. Those ideas of awe and veneration, which opinion throws round the persons of princes, make us esteem the very *same event* in their fortunes, as more august and emphatical, than in the fortunes of private men. In the *one*, it is ordinary and familiar to our conceptions; it is singular and surprizing, in the *other*. The fall of a *cottage*, by the accidents of time and weather, is almost unheeded; while the ruin of a *tower*, which the neighbourhood hath gazed at, for ages,

with

with admiration, strikes all observers with concern. So that, if we chuse to continue the absurdity, taken notice of in the last article, of planning *unimportant action* in our tragedy, we should, at least, take care to give it this foreign and extrinsic *importance* of great *actors*: Yet our passion for the *familiar* goes so far, that we have tragedies, not only of private action, but of *private persons*; and so have well nigh annihilated the noblest of the two dramas amongst us. On the whole it appears, that as the proper object of tragedy is *action*, so it is *important action*, and therefore more especially the action of *great and illustrious men*. Each of these conclusions is the direct consequence of our idea of its *end*.

The reverse of all this holds true of COMEDY. For,

1. Comedy, by the very terms of the definition, is conversant about *characters*. And, if we observe, that which creates the pleasure we find in contemplating the lives of men, considered as distinct from the *interest* we take in their fortunes, is the contemplation



templation of their manners and humours. Their *actions*, when they are not of that sort, which seizes our admiration, or catches the affections, are no otherwise considered by us, than as they are sensible indications of the internal sentiment and disposition. Our intimate consciousness of the several turns and windings of our nature, makes us attend to these pictures of human life with an incredible curiosity. And herein the proper entertainment, which comic representation, *as such*, administers to the mind, consists. By turning the thought on *events and action*, this entertainment is proportionably lessened; that is, the *end* of comedy is less perfectly attained [*d*].

[*d*] Aristotle was of the same mind, as appears from his definition of comedy, which, says he, is ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΦΑΥΛΟΤΕΡΩΝ. [x. 6.] that is, *the imitation of characters*, whatever be the distinct meaning of the term φαυλότεροι. It is true, this critic, in his account of the origin of tragedy and comedy, makes them both the imitations of ACTIONS. Οἱ μὲν βιωτότεροι ΤΑΣ ΚΑΛΑΣ ἱμῶν ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ, οἱ δὲ ὑπελότεροι ΤΑΣ τῶν φαύλων. [x. 8.] Yet, even here, the expression is so put, as if he had been conscious that *persons*, not *actions*, were the direct object of comedy. And the quotation, now alledged from another place, where

But

But here, again, though *action* be not the main object of comedy, yet it is not to be neglected, any more than *character* in tragedy, but comes in as an useful accessory, or assistant to it. For the *manners of men* only shew themselves, or shew themselves most usually, in *action*. It is this, which fetches out the latent strokes of *character*, and renders the inward *temper and disposition* the object of sense. *Probable circumstances* are then imagined, and a certain *train of action* contrived, to evidence the *internal qualities*. There is no *other*, or no *probable way*, but this, of bringing us acquainted with them. Again; by engaging his *characters* in a course of action and the pursuit of some *end*, the comic poet leaves them to express themselves undisguisedly, and *without design*; in which the essence of *humour* consists.

Add to this, that when the *fable* is so contrived as to attach the mind, we very naturally fancy ourselves present at a course of *living action*. And this illusion quickens

a definition is given more in form, shews, that this was, in effect, his sentiment.

our attention to the *characters*, which no longer appear to us creatures of the poet's fiction, but actors in real life.

These observations concerning the *moderated* use of action in comedy, instruct us what to think " of those intricate Spanish  
" plots, which have been in use, and have  
" taken both with us and some French  
" writers for the stage. The truth is,  
" they have hindered very much the main  
" end of comedy. For when these un-  
" natural plots are used, the mind is not  
" only entirely *drawn off* from the cha-  
" racters by those surprizing turns and re-  
" volutions; but characters have no oppor-  
" tunity even of being *called out* and dis-  
" playing themselves. For the actors of all  
" characters *succeed* and are *embarrassed*  
" alike, when the instruments for carrying  
" on designs are only *perplexed apartments*,  
" *dark entries*, *disguised habits*, and *ladders*  
" *of ropes*. The comic plot is, and must,  
" indeed, be carried on by *deceit*. The  
" Spanish scene does it by deceiving the  
" man *through his senses*: Terence and Mo-  
" liere, by deceiving him *through his passions*  
" and

*and affections.* This is the right method :  
 “ for the character is *not* called out under  
 “ the *first* species of deceit : under the  
 “ *second*, the character does *all*.”

2. As *character*, not *action*, is the object of comedy ; so the *characters* it paints must not be of *singular and illustrious note*, either for their *virtues* or *vices*. The reason is, that such characters take too fast hold of the *affections*, and so call off the mind from adverting to the *truth* of the manners ; that is, from receiving the *pleasure*, which this poem *intends*. Our *sense of imitation* is that to which the comic poet addresses himself ; but such pictures of *eminent worth* or *villainy* seize upon the *moral sense* ; and by raising the strong correspondent passions of *admiration* and *abhorrence*, turn us aside from contemplating the *imitation itself*. And,

3. For a like cause, comedy confines its views to the characters of *private and inferior persons*. For the *truth of character*, which is the spring of *humour*, being necessarily, as was observed, to be shewn through the medium of *action*, and the  
 actions

actions of the great being usually such as excite the *pathos*, it follows of course, that these cannot, with propriety, be made the actors in comedy. Persons of high and public life, if they are drawn agreeably to our accustomed ideas of them, must be employed in such a *course of action*, as arrests the attention, or interests the passions; and either way it diverts the mind from observing the *truth* of manners, that is, it prevents the attainment of the specific *end*, which comedy designs.

And if the reason, here given, be sufficient to exclude the *higher characters* in life from this *drama*, even where the representation is intended to be *serious*, we shall find it still more improper to expose them in any pleasant or ridiculous light. It is true, the follies and foibles of the great will apparently take an easier ridicule by representation, than those of their inferiors. And this it was, which misled the celebrated P. CORNEILLE into the opinion, *that the actions of the great, and even of kings themselves, provided they be of the ridiculous kind, are as fit objects of comedy, as*  
any

*any other.* But he did not reflect, that the *actions* of the great being usually such, as interest the intire community, at least scarcely any other falling beneath vulgar notice; and the higher *characters* being rarely seen or contemplated by the people but with reverence, hence it is, that in fact, *the representation of high life* cannot, without offence to probability, be made *ridiculous*, or consequently be admitted into comedy under this view. And therefore PLAUTUS, when he thought fit to introduce these *reverend personages* on the comic stage in his AMPHITRUO, though he employed them in no very serious matters, was yet obliged to apologize for this impropriety in calling his play a *Tragi-comedy*. What he says upon the occasion, though delivered with an air of pleasantry, is, according to the laws of just criticism:

*Faciam ut commista sit* TRAGICO-COMOEDIA.

*Nam me perpetuo facere, ut sit Comoedia,*

REGES QUO VENIANT ET DII, *non par arbitror.*

*Quid igitur? quoniam hic* SERVOS QUOQUE  
PARTES HABET,

*Faciam sit, proinde ut dixi,* TRAGICO-COMEDIA.

PROL. IN AMPHIT.

And



And now, taking the *idea* of the *two dramas*, as here opened, along with us, we shall be able to give an account of several attributes, *common* to both, or which further *characterize* each of them. And,

1. *A plot will be required in both.* For the end of tragedy being to excite the affections *by action*; and the end of comedy, to manifest the truth of character *through* it; an artful *constitution of the Fable* is required to do justice both to the one and the other. It serves to bring out the *pathos*, and to produce *humour*. And thus the general form or structure of the two dramas will be one and the same.

2. More particularly, *an unity and even simplicity in the conduct of the fable [e] is a*

[e] The neglect of this is one of the greatest defects in the *modern drama*; which in nothing falls so much short of the perfection of the Greek scene as in this want of simplicity in the construction of its fable. The good sense of the author of the *History of the Italian Theatre* (who, though a mere player, appears to have had juster notions of the drama, than the generality of even professed critics) was sensibly struck with this difference in *tragedy*. "Quant à l'unité d'action," says he, "je trouve une grande différence entre les tragedies Grecques et les trage-

*perfection in each.* For the course of the *affections* is diverted and weakened by the intervention of what we call a *double plot*; and even by a multiplicity of *subordinate events*, though tending to a common end; and of *persons*, though all of them, some way, concerned in promoting it. The like consideration shews the observance of this *rule* to be essential to just comedy. For when the *attention* is split on so many interfering objects, we are not at leisure to observe, nor do we so fully enter into, the *truth of representation* in any of them; the *sense of humour*, as of the *pathos*, depending very much on the continued and undiverted operation of its *object* upon us.

3. The two dramas agree, also, in this circumstance; that the *manners* of the persons exhibited should be *imperfect*. An absolutely *good*, or an absolutely *bad*, cha-

“dies Françaises; j'apperois toujours aisément  
 “l'action des tragedies Grecques, et je ne la perds  
 “point de vûe; mais dans les tragedies Françaises,  
 “j'avoüe, que j'ai souvent bien de la peine à demêler  
 “l'action des episodes, dont elle est chargée.” [*Hist.*  
*du Theatre Italien, par Louis Riccoboni, p. 293.*  
*Paris, 1728.*]

racter

acter is foreign to the purpose of each. And the reason is, 1. That such a representation is *improbable*. And *probability* constitutes, as we have seen, the very essence of comedy; and is the *medium*, through which tragedy is enabled most powerfully to affect us. 2. Such *characters* are improper to *comedy*, because, as was hinted above, they turn the attention aside from contemplating the *expression* of them, which we call *humour*. And they are not less unsuited to *tragedy*, because though they make a forcible impression on the mind, yet, as Aristotle well observes, they do not produce the passions of *pity and terror*; that is, their *impressions* are not of the nature of that *pathos*, by which tragedy works its purpose. [x. 17].

There are, likewise, some peculiarities, which distinguish the two dramas. And

1. *Though a plot be necessary to produce humour, as well as the pathos; yet a good plot is not so essential to comedy, as tragedy.* For the pathos is the result of the *entire action*, that is, of all the circumstances of the story taken together, and conspiring, by

a probable tendency, to a completion in the *event*. A failure in the just arrangement and disposition of the parts may, then, affect what is of the essence of this drama. On the contrary, *humour*, though brought out by *action*, is not the effect of the *whole*, but may be distinctly evidenced in a *single scene*; as may be eminently illustrated in the two comedies of Fletcher, called *The Little French Lawyer*, and *The Spanish Curate*. The nice contexture of the fable, therefore, though it may give a *pleasure* of another kind, is not so immediately required to the production of *that* pleasure, which the nature of comedy demands. Much less is there occasion for that labour and ingenuity of contrivance, which is seen in the intricacy of the Spanish fable. Yet this is the taste of our comedy. Our writers are all for plot and intrigue; and never appear so well satisfied with themselves as when, to speak in their own phrase, they contrive to have a great deal of *business* on their hands. Indeed they have reason. For it hides their inability to colour *manners*,

ners, which is the proper but much harder province of true comedy.

2. *Tragedy succeeds best, when the subject is real; comedy, when it is feigned.* What would this say, but that tragedy, turning our attention principally on the *action represented*, finds means to *interest* us more strongly on the persuasion of its being taken from *actual life*? While comedy, on the other hand, can neglect these scrupulous measures of *probability*, as intent only on exhibiting *characters*; for which purpose an *invented story* will serve much better. The reason is, *real action* does not ordinarily afford variety of incidents enough to shew the *character* fully: *feigned action* may.

And this difference, we may observe, explains the reason why tragedies are often formed on the most *trite and vulgar subjects*, whereas a *new* subject is generally demanded in comedy. The *reality* of the story being of so much consequence to interest the affections, the more *known* it is, the fitter for the poet's purpose. But a *feigned* story having been found more convenient

for the display of characters, it grew into a rule that the story should be always *new*. This disadvantage on the side of the comic poet is taken notice of in those verses of Antiphanes, or rather, as Casaubon conjectures, of *Aristophanes*, in a play of his, intituled, *Ποίησις*. The reason of this difference now appears.

—Μακάριόν ἐστιν ἡ τραγωδία  
 Ποίημα καὶ πᾶντ'· ἄγε πρῶτον οἱ λόγοι  
 Ὑπὸ τῶν θεατῶν εἶσιν ἐγνωρισμένοι,  
 Πρὶν καὶ τιν' εἰπεῖν, ὥς ὑπομνησθαι μόνον  
 Δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν· Οἰδίπεν γὰρ ἂν γε Φῶ,  
 Τὰ δ' ἄλλα πᾶντ' ἴσασιν. Ὁ πατὴρ Λαίῳς  
 Μήτηρ Ἰοκάστη, θυγατέρες, παῖδες, τίνες·  
 Τὶ πείσεθ' ἕτος, τί πεποίηκεν . . . .  
 Ἡμῖν δὲ ταῦτ' ἐκ ἔστιν· ἀλλὰ πάντῃα δεῖ  
 Εὐρεῖν ὀνόματα καὶνὰ, τὰ διωκημένα  
 Πρότερον, τὰ νῦν παρόντα, τὴν καλῶςροφὴν,  
 Τὴν εὐβολίην. ἂν ἔν τι τέτων παραλίπη,  
 Χρέμης τις, ἢ Φεῖδων τις ἐκσυρίττεται,  
 Πηλεῖ δὲ ταῦτ' ἔξεσι καὶ Τεύκρῳ ποιεῖν.

One sees, then, the reason why Tragedy prefers real *subjects*, and even old ones;  
 and,



and, on the contrary, why comedy delights in feigned subjects, and new.

The same genius in the two dramas is observable, in their draught of *characters*. Comedy makes all its Characters *general*; Tragedy, *particular*. The *Avare* of Moliere is not so properly the picture of a *covetous man*, as of *covetousness* itself. Racine's *Nero*, on the other hand, is not a picture of *cruelty*, but of a *cruel man*.

Yet here it will be proper to guard against two mistakes, which the principles now delivered may be thought to countenance.

The *first* is with regard to *tragic* characters, which I say are *particular*. My meaning is, they are *more* particular than those of comedy. That is, the *end* of tragedy does not require or permit the poet to draw together so many of those characteristic circumstances which shew the manners, as Comedy. For, in the former of these dramas, no more of *character* is shewn, than what the course of the action necessarily calls forth. Whereas, all or most of the features, by which it is usually

distinguished, are sought out and industriously displayed in the *latter*.

The case is much the same as in *portrait painting*; where, if a great master be required to draw a *particular face*, he gives the very lineaments he finds in it; yet so far resembling to what he observes of the same turn in other faces, as not to affect any minute circumstance of peculiarity. But if the same artist were to design a *head* in general, he would assemble together all the customary traits and features, any where observable through the species, which should best express the idea, whatever it was, he had conceived in his own mind, and wanted to exhibit in the picture.

There is much the same difference between the two sorts of *dramatic* portraits. Whence it appears that in calling the tragic character *particular*, I suppose it only *less representative* of the kind than the comic; not that the draught of so much character as it is concerned to represent should not be *general*: the contrary of which I have asserted and explained at large elsewhere [*Notes on the A. P.* 317.]

*Next,*

*Next*, I have said, the characters of just comedy are *general*. And this I explain by the instance of the *Avare* of Moliere, which conforms more to the idea of *avarice*, than to that of the real *avaricious man*. But here again, the reader will not understand me, as saying this in the strict sense of the words. I even think Moliere faulty in the instance given; though, with some necessary explanation, it may well enough serve to express my meaning.

The view of the comic scene being to delineate characters, this end, I suppose, will be attained most perfectly, by making those characters as *universal* as possible. For thus the person shewn in the drama, being the representative of all characters of the same kind, furnishes in the highest degree the entertainment of *humour*. But then this universality must be such as agrees not to our idea of the *possible* effects of the character as conceived in the abstract, but to the *actual* exertion of its powers; which experience justifies, and common life allows. Moliere, and before him Plautus, had offended in this; that for a  
 4 picture

picture of the *avaritious man*, they presented us with a fantastic unpleasing draught of the *passion of avarice*. I call this a *fantastic* draught, because it hath no archetype in nature. And it is, farther, an *unpleasing* one; for, being the delineation of a *simple passion unmixed*, it wanted all those

—Lights and shades, whose well-accorded strife  
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.

These *lights and shades* (as the poet finely calls the intermixture of many passions, which, with the *leading* or principal one, form the human character) must be blended together in every picture of dramatic manners; because the avowed business of the drama is to image real life. Yet the draught of the *leading* passion must be as general as this *strife* in nature permits, in order to express the intended character more perfectly.

All which again is easily illustrated in the instance of painting. In *portraits of character*, as we may call those that give a picture of the *manners*, the artist, if he be of real ability, will not go to work on the possibility

possibility of an abstract idea. All he intends is, to shew that some one quality *predominates*: and this he images strongly, and by such signatures as are most conspicuous in the operation of the *leading passion*. And when he hath done this, we may, in common speech or in compliment, if we please, to his art, say of such a portrait that it images to us not the *man*, but the *passion*; just as the antients observed of the famous statue of Apollodorus by Sila- rion, that it expressed not the angry *Apollodorous*, but his passion of *anger* [f]. But by this must be understood only that he has well expressed the leading parts of the designed character. For the rest, he treats his *subject* as he would any other; that is, he represents the *concomitant affections*, or considers merely that general symmetry and proportion which are expected in a human figure. And this is to copy nature, which affords no specimen of a man turned all into a single passion. No metamorphosis could be more strange or incredible.

[f] *Non hominem ex ære fecit, sed iracundiam.*  
Plin. xxxiv. 8.

Yet portraits of this vicious taste are the admiration of common starrers, who, if they find a picture of a *miser* for instance (as there is no commoner subject of moral portraits) in a collection, where every muscle is strained, and feature hardened into the expression of this idea, never fail to profess their wonder and approbation of it.—On this idea of excellence, Le Brun's book of the *PASSIONS* must be said to contain a set of the justest *moral portraits*: And the *CHARACTERS* of Theophrastus might be recommended, in a *dramatic* view, as preferable to those of Terence.

The virtuosi in the fine arts would certainly laugh at the former of these judgments. But the latter, I suspect, will not be thought so extraordinary: at least if one may guess from the practice of some of our best comic writers, and the success which such plays have commonly met with. It were easy to instance in almost all plays of character. But if the reader would see the extravagance of building dramatic manners on abstract ideas, in its full light, he needs only turn to B. Jonson's *Every man*  
*out*



out of his humour; which, under the name of a *play of character*, is in fact an unnatural, and, as the painters call it, *hard* delineation of a group of *simply existing passions*, wholly chimerical, and unlike to any thing we observe in the commerce of real life. Yet this comedy has always had its admirers. And *Randolph*, in particular, was so taken with the design, that he seems to have formed his *muse's looking-glass* in express imitation of it.

Shakespeare, we may observe, is in this, as in all the other more essential beauties of the drama, a perfect model. If the discerning reader peruse attentively his comedies with this view, he will find his *best-marked* characters discoursing, through a great deal of their *parts*, just like any other, and only expressing their essential and leading qualities occasionally, and as circumstances concur to give an easy exposition to them. This singular excellence of his comedy, was the effect of his copying faithfully after nature, and of the force and vivacity of his genius, which made him attentive to what the progress of the scene successively

cessively presented to him: whilst *imitation* and *inferior talents* occasion little writers to wind themselves up into the habit of attending perpetually to their main view, and a solicitude to keep their favourite characters in constant play and agitation. Though, in this illiberal exercise of their wit, they may be said to use the *persons of their drama* as a certain facetious sort do their *acquaintance*, whom they urge and teize with their civilities, not to give them a reasonable share in the conversation, but to force them to play *tricks* for the diversion of the company.

I have been the longer on this argument, to prevent the reader's carrying what I say of the superiority of *plays of character* to *plays of intrigue* into an extreme; a mistake, into which some good writers have been unsuspectingly betrayed by the acknowledged truth of the general principle. It is so natural for men, on all occasions, to fly out into extremes, that too much care cannot be had to retain them in a due medium. But to return from this digression to  
the

the consideration of the difference of the two dramas.

3. A sameness of *character* is not usually objected to in tragedy: in comedy, it would not be endured. The passion of *avarice*, to resume the instance given above, being the main object, we find nothing but a disgusting repetition in a second attempt to delineate that *character*. A particular cruel man, only engrossing our regard in *Nero*, when the train of events evidencing such cruelty is changed, we have all the novelty we look for, and can contemplate with pleasure the very *same* character, set forth by a different course of action, or displayed in some other *person*.

4. Comedy succeeds best when the scene is laid *at home*, tragedy for the most part when *abroad*. "This appears at first  
"light whimsical and capricious, but has  
"its foundation in nature. What we chiefly seek in comedy is a true image of life  
"and *manners*; but we are not easily  
"brought to think we have it given us,  
"when dressed in foreign modes and fash-  
"ions. And yet a good writer must fol-  
"low

“low his scene, and observe decorum. On  
 “the contrary, it is the action in tragedy  
 “which most engages our attention. But  
 “to fit a domestic occurrence for the stage,  
 “we must take greater liberties with the  
 “action than a well-known story will al-  
 “low.” [*Pope's Works*, vol. iv. p. 185.]

Other *characters* of the two dramas, as well *peculiar*, as *common*, which might be accounted for from the just notion of them, delivered above, I leave to the observation of the reader. For my intention is not to write a complete treatise on the drama, but briefly to lay down such principles, from whence its *laws* may be derived.

## CHAP. II.

### OF THE GENIUS OF COMEDY.

BUT it may not be amiss to express myself a little more fully as to the *genius* of comedy; which, for want of passing through the hands of such a critic, as Aristotle has been less perfectly understood.

Its *end* is the production of *humour*: or, which comes to the same thing, “of that  
 “*pleasure*,

“*pleasure*, which the *truth* of representation affords, in the *exhibition* of the *private characters* of life, more particularly “their *specific differences*.” I add this *latter* clause, because the principal pleasure we take in contemplating characters consists in noting those *differences*. The general attributes of humanity, if represented ever so truly, give us but a slender entertainment. They, of course, make a part of the drama; but we chiefly delight in a picture of those peculiar *traits*, which distinguish the species. Now these discriminating marks in the characters of men are not *necessarily* the causes of ridicule, or pleasantry of any kind; but *accidentally*, and according to the nature or quality of them. The vanity, and impertinent boasting of *Thraso* is the natural object of *contempt*, and, when truly and forcibly expressed in his own character, provokes *ridicule*. The easy humanity of *Mitio*, which is the leading part of his character, is the object of *approbation*; and, when shewn in his own conduct, excites a *pleasure*, in common with all just *expression of the manners*,

but of a *serious* nature, as being joined with the sentiment of *esteem*.

But now as most men find a greater pleasure in gratifying the passion of *contempt*, than the calm instinct of *approbation*, and since perhaps the constitution of human life is such, as affords more exercise for the one than the other, hence it hath come to pass, that the comic poet, who paints for the generality, and follows nature, chuses more commonly to select and describe those *peculiarities* in the human character, which, by their nature, excite *pleasantry*, than such as create a serious regard and esteem. Hence some persons have appropriated the name of *comedies* to those dramas, which chiefly aim at producing *humour*, in the more *proper* sense of the word; under which view it means "such an expression or picture of what is "odd, or inordinate in each character, as "gives us the fullest and strongest image "of the original, and by the truth of the "representation exposes the *ridicule* of it." And it is certain, that comedy receives great advantage from representations of this



this kind. Nay, it cannot well subsist without them. Yet it doth not exclude the other and more *serious* entertainment, which, as it stands on the same foundation of *truth of representation*, I venture to include under the *common term*.

Further, there are *two ways* of evidencing the characteristic and predominant qualities of men, or, of producing *humour*, which require to be observed. The *one* is, when they are shewn in the perpetual course and tenor of the representation; that is, when the *humour* results from the *general* conduct of the person in the drama. and the discourse, which he holds in it. The *other* is, when, by an happy and lively stroke, the characteristic quality is laid open and exposed *at once*.

The *first* sort of *humour* is that which we find in the antients, and especially Terence. The *latter* is almost peculiar to the moderns; who, in uniting these two species of *humour*, have brought a vast improvement to the comic scene. The reason of this difference may perhaps have been the singular simplicity of the old writers, who

were contented to take up with such sentiments or circumstances, as most naturally and readily occurred in the course of the drama: whereas the moderns have been ambitious to shew a more exquisite and studied investigation into the workings of human nature, and have sought out for those peculiarly striking lineaments, in which the essence of character consists. On the same account, I suppose, it was that the antients had *fewer* characters in their plays, than the moderns, and those more *general*; that is, their dramatic writers were well satisfied with picturing the most *usual* personages, and in their most *obvious* lights. They did not, as the moderns (who, if they would aspire to the praise of *novelty*, were obliged to this route), cast about for less *familiar* characters; and the nicer and *less observed* peculiarities which distinguish *each*. Be it as it will, the observation is certain. Later dramatists have apparently shewn a more accurate knowledge of human life: and, by opening these new and untried veins of *humour*, have exceedingly enriched the comedy of our times.

But,

But, though we are not to look for the *two species of humour*, before-mentioned, in the same perfection on the simpler stages of *Greece and Rome*, as in *our improved Theatres*, yet the *first* of them was clearly seen and successfully practised by the ancient comic masters; and there are not wanting in them some few examples even of the *last*. “The old man in the *Mother-in-Law* says to his Son,

*Tum tu igitur nihil adtulisti huc plus unâ sententiâ.*

“This, as an excellent person observed to me, is true *humour*. For his character, which was that of a lover of money, drew the observation naturally and forcibly from him. His disappointment of a rich succession made him speak contemptibly of a moral lesson, which rich and covetous men, in their best humours, have no high reverence for. And this too without *design*; which is important, and shews the distinction of what, in the more restrained sense of the word, we call *humour*, from other modes of *pleasantry*. For had a young friend of the son, an unconcerned spectator of the scene, made

“ the observation, it had then, in another’s  
 “ mouth, been *wit*, or a designed *banter* on  
 “ the father’s disappointment. As, on the  
 “ other hand, when such characteristic qua-  
 “ lities are exaggerated, and the expression  
 “ of them stretched beyond *truth*, they be-  
 “ come *buffoonry*, even in the person’s *own*.”

This is an instance of the *second species* of humour, under its idea of exciting *ridicule*. But it may, also, be employed with the utmost *seriousness*; as being only a method of expressing the *truth* of character in the *most striking* manner. This same *old man* in the Hecyra will furnish an example. Though a lover of money, he appears, in the main, of an honest and worthy nature, and to have born the truest affection to an amiable and favourite son. In the perplexity of the scene, which had arisen from the supposed misunderstanding between his *son’s* wife and his *own*, he proposes, as an expedient to end all differences, to retire with his wife into the country. And to enforce this proposal to the young man, who had his reasons for being against it, he adds,

odiosa

*odiosa haec est aetas adolescentulis :*

*E medio aequum excedere est : postremò nos jam fabula  
Sumus, Pamphile, senex atque anus.*

There is nothing, I suppose, in these words, which provokes a smile. Yet the *humour* is strong, as before. In his solicitude to promote his son's satisfaction, he lets fall a sentiment truly characteristic, and which old men usually take great pains to conceal; I mean, his acknowledgment of *that suspicious fear of contempt, which is natural to old age*. So true a picture of life, in the representation of this *weakness*, might, in other circumstances, have created some *pleasantry*; but the *occasion*, which forced it from him, discovering, at the same time, the *amiable disposition* of the speaker, covers the ridicule of it, or more properly converts it into an object of our *esteem*.

We have here, then, a kind of *intermediate* species of *humour* betwixt the *ridiculous* and the *grave*; and may perceive how insensibly the *one* becomes the *other*, by the accidental mixture of a virtuous *quality*, attracting *esteem*. Which may serve to reconcile the reader to the appli-

cation of this *term* even to such *expression* of the manners, as is perfectly *serious*; that is, where the *quality represented* is entirely, and without the least *touch* of attending ridicule, the object of *moral approbation* to the mind. As in that famous asseveration of Chremes in the *Self-tormentor* :

*Homo sum : humani nihil à me alienum puto.*

This is a strong expression of character; and, coming unaffectedly from him in answer to the cutting reproof of his friend,

*Chreme, tantumne ab re tuâ 'st oti tibi*

*Aliena ut cures ; ea quæ nihil ad te adinent ?*

hath the essence of true *humour*, that is, is a *lively picture of the manners without design*.

Yet in this instance, which hath not been observed, the *humour*, though of a serious cast, is heightened by a mixture of *satire*. For we are not to take this, as hath constantly been done, for a sentiment of pure humanity and the natural ebullition of benevolence. We may observe in it a designed stroke of satirical resentment.



*The Self-tormentor*, as we saw, had ridiculed Chremes' *curiosity* by a severe reproof. Chremes, to be even with him, reflects upon the *inhumanity* of his temper. "You," says he, "seem such a foe to humanity, that you spare it not *in yourself*; I, on the other hand, am affected, when I see it suffer in *another*."

Whence we learn, that, though all which is requisite to constitute comic humour, be a *just expression of character without design*, yet such *expression* is felt more *sensibly*, when it is further enlivened by *ridicule*, or quickened by the poignancy of *satire*.

From the account of comedy, here given, it may appear, that the idea of this drama is much enlarged beyond what it was in Aristotle's time; who defines it to be, *an imitation of light and trivial actions, provoking ridicule*. His notion was taken from the state and practice of the Athenian stage; that is, from the *old* or *middle* comedy, which answers to this description. The great revolution, which the introduction of the *new comedy* made in the drama, did not happen till afterwards. This  
proposed

proposed for its *object*, in general, *the actions and characters of ordinary life*; which are not, of necessity, ridiculous, but, as appears to every observer, of a mixt kind, *serious*, as well as *ludicrous*, and, within their proper sphere of influence, not unfrequently, even *important*. This kind of *imitation*, therefore, now admits the *serious*; and its scenes, even without the least mixture of *pleasantry*, are entirely *comic*. Though the common run of *laughers* in our theatre are so little aware of the extension of this *province*, that I should scarcely have hazarded the observation, but for the authority of *Terence*; who hath confessedly very little of the *pleasant* in his drama. Nay, one of the most admired of his comedies hath the gravity, and, in some places, almost the solemnity of *tragedy itself*. But this *idea* of comedy is not peculiar to the more polite and liberal *antients*. Some of the best *modern* comedies are fashioned in agreement to it. And an instance or two, which I am going to produce from the stage of simple nature, may seem to shew in the plain suggestion of common sense.

“ The

"The Amautas (says the author of the  
 " *Royal Commentaries of PERU*), who were  
 " men of the best ingenuity amongst them,  
 " invented COMEDIES and TRAGEDIES;  
 " which, on their solemn festivals, they re-  
 " presented before the King and the Lords  
 " of his court. The plot or argument of  
 " their *tragedies* was, to represent *their*  
 " *military exploits, and the triumphs, victo-*  
 " *ries, and heroic actions, of their renowned*  
 " *men.* And the subject or design of their  
 " *comedies* was, to demonstrate the man-  
 " *ner of good husbandry in cultivating and*  
 " *manuring their fields, and to shew the*  
 " *management of domestic affairs, with other*  
 " *familiar matters.* These plays, continues  
 " he, were not made up of obscene and  
 " dishonest farces, but such as were of  
 " *serious entertainment, composed of grave*  
 " *and acute sentences, &c."*

Two things are observable in this brief  
 account of the Peruvian drama. *First*,  
 that its *species* had respect to the very dif-  
 ferent *objects* of the *higher* or *lower* stations.  
 For the *great* and *powerful* were occupied  
 in

in *war*: and *agriculture* was the chief employment of *private and ordinary life*. And, in this distinction, these *Indian* perfectly agreed with the old Roman poets; whose *PRAETEXTATA* and *TOGATA* shew, that they had precisely the same ideas of the drama. Secondly, we do not learn only, what difference there *was* betwixt their tragedy and comedy, but we are also told, what difference there was *not*. It was not, that one was *serious*, and the other *pleasant*. For we find it expressly asserted of *both*, that they *were* of *grave and serious entertainment*.

And this last will explain a similar observation on the Chinese, *who*, as P. DE PREMERE acquaints us, *make no distinction betwixt tragedies and comedies*. That is, *no distinction*, but what the different *subjects* of each make necessary. They do not, as our European dramas, differ in this, that the *one* is intended to make us *weep*, and the other to make us *laugh*.

These are full and precise testimonies. For I lay no stress on what the Historian of *Peru* tells us, *that there were no obscen-*

*ties*

ties in their comedy, nor on what an encomiast of China pretends, *that there is not so much as an obscene word in all their language* [g]: as being sensible, that though indeed these must needs be considerable abatements to the *humour* of their comic scenes, yet, their ingenuity might possibly find means to remedy these defects by the invention and dextrous application of the *double entendre*, which, on our stage, is found to supply the place of rank *obscenity*, and, indeed, to do its office of exciting *laughster* almost as well.

But, as I said, there is no occasion for this *argument*. We may venture, without the help of it, to join these authorities to *that* of Terence; which, together, enable us to conclude very fully, in opposition to

[g] P. ALVAREZ SEMEDO, speaking of their poetry, says, "Le plus grand avantage et la plus grande utilité qu'en ont tiré les CHINOIS, est cette grande modestie et retenue incomparable, qui se voit en leurs écrits, n'ayant pas même une lettre en tous leurs livres, ni en toutes leurs écritures, pour exprimer les parties honteuses de la nature." [Hist. UNIV. DE LA CHINE, p. 82. à LYON 1667. 4<sup>re</sup>.]

the

the general sentiment, that *ridicule* is not of the *essence of comedy* [b].

But, because the general practice of the *Greek and Roman theatres*, which strongly countenance the other opinion, may still be thought to outweigh this single *Latin poet*, together with all the *eastern and western barbarians*, that can be thrown into the balance, let me go one step further, and, by explaining the rise and occasion of this *practice*, demonstrate, that, in the present case, their authority is, in fact, of no moment.

The form of the Greek, from whence the Roman and our drama is taken, though generally *improved* by reflexion and just criticism, yet, like so many other great inventions, was, in its original, the *product* of pure chance. Each of its species had sprung out of a *chorus-song*, which was afterwards incorporated into the legitimate drama, and found essential to its true form. But *reason*, which saw to establish what was

[b] LE RIDICULE EST CE QU'IL Y A DE PLUS ESSENTIEL A LA COMEDIE. [P. RAPIN, REFLEX. SUR LA POET. p. 154. PARIS 1684.]



*right* in this fortuitous conformation of the drama, did not equally succeed in detecting and separating what was *wrong*. For the *occasion* of this chorus-song, in their religious festivities, was widely different: the business, *at one time*, being to express their gratitude, in celebrating the praises of their gods and heroes; *at another*, to indulge their mirth, in jesting and sporting among themselves. The character of their drama, which had its rise from hence [*i*], conformed exactly to the difference of these *occasions*. *Tragedy*, through all its

[*i*] Οἱ μὲν σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἑμιμέλο ἀράξεις, καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων τύχας· οἱ δὲ εὐτρίστεροι, τὰς τῶν φαύλων, ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΨΟΓΟΥΣ ΠΟΙΟΥΝΤΕΣ, ΩΣΙΗΡ ΕΥΤΕΡΟΙ ΥΜΝΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΚΩΜΙΑ. [ΠΕΡ. ΠΟΙΗΤ. κ.α.] This is Aristotle's account of the origin of the different *species of POETRY*. They were occasioned, he says, by the different and even opposite *temper and dispositions of men*: *those of a loftier spirit delighting in the encomiastic poetry, while the humbler sort betook themselves to satire*. But this, also, is the just account of the rise and character of the different *species of the DRAMA*. For they grew up, he tells us in this very chapter, from the DITHYRAMBIC, and PHALLIC songs. And who were the *men*, who chaunted *these* but the ΣΕΜΝΟΤΕΡΟΙ, and ΕΥΤΕΛΕΣΤΕΡΟΙ, before-mentioned? And how were they *employed* in them, several

several successive stages of improvement, was serious and even solemn. And a gay or rather buffoon spirit was the characteristic of *comedy*.

We see, then, the *genius* of these two poems was accidentally fixed in agreement to their respective *originals*; consequent writers contenting themselves to embellish and perfect, not *change*, the primary form. The practice of the antient stage is then of no further authority, than as it accords to just criticism. The solemn cast of their *tragedy*, indeed, bears the test, and is found to be suitable to its real nature. The same does not appear of the burlesque form of *comedy*; no reason having been given, why it must, of necessity, have the *ridiculous* for its object. Nay the effects of but the former, in *hymning the praises of Bacchus*; the latter, in *dealing about obscene jokes and taunting invectives on each other*? So that the *characters* of the men, and their *subjects*, being exactly the same in both, what is said of the *one* is equally applicable to the *other*. It was proper to observe this; or the reader might, perhaps, object to the use made of this passage, *here*, as well as *above*, where it is brought to illustrate Aristotle's notion of the *natures* of the tragic and comic poetry.

improved

improved criticism on the later Greek comedy give a presumption of the direct contrary. For, in proportion to the gradual refinement of this *species* in the hands of its greatest masters, the buffoon cast of the comic drama was insensibly dropt, and even grew into a severity, which departed at length very widely from the original idea. The admirable scholar of THEOPHRASTUS, who had been tutored in the exact study of human life, saw so much of the genuine character of true comedy, that he cleansed it, at once, from the greater part of those buffoonries, which had, till his time, defiled its nature. His great imitator, Terence, went still further; and, whether impelled by his native humour, or determined by his truer taste, mixed so little of the *ridiculous* in his comedy, as plainly shews, it might, in his opinion, subsist entirely without it. His *practice* indeed, and the theory, here delivered, nearly meet. And the conclusion is, that *comedy*, which is the image of private life, may take either character of *pleasant* or *serious*, as it chances, or even *unite* them into one piece;

but that the *former* is by no means more essential to its constitution, than the *latter*.

I foresee but one objection, that can be made to this theory; which has, in effect, been obviated already. "It may be said, that, if this account of *comedy* be just, it would follow, that it might, with equal propriety, admit the gravest and most affecting events, which inferior life furnishes, as the lightest. Whereas it is notorious, that distresses of a deep and solemn nature, though faithfully copied from the fortunes of private men, would never be endured, under the name of *comedy*, on the stage. Nay, such representations would rather pass, in the public judgment, for legitimate *tragedies*; of which kind, we have, indeed, some examples in our language."

Two things are mistaken in this objection. *First*, it supposes, that deep distresses of every kind are inconsistent with comedy; the contrary of which may be learnt from the SELF-TORMENTOR of Terence. *Next*, it insinuates, that, if deep distresses of any kind may be admitted

into

into comedy, the *deepest* may. Which is equally erroneous. For, the *manners* being the proper object of comedy, the *distress* must not exceed a certain degree of *severity*, lest it draw off the mind from them, and confine it to the *action* only: as would be the case of *murder*, *adultery*, and other atrocious crimes, infesting *private*, as well as *public*, life, were they to be represented, in all their horrors, on the stage. And though some of these, as *adultery*, have been brought, of late, into the comic scene; yet it was not till it had lost the atrocity of its nature, and was made the subject of mirth and pleasantry to the fashionable world. But for this happy disposition of the times, comedy, as managed by some of our writers, had lost its nature, and become *tragic*. And, yet, considered as *tragic*, such representations of low life had been improper. Because, where the intent is to *affect*, the subject is with more advantage taken from *high life*, all the circumstances being, there, more peculiarly adapted to answer that end.

The solution then of the difficulty is, in one word, this. All *distresses* are not *improper* in comedy; but such only as attach the mind to the *fable*, in neglect of the *manners*, which are its chief object. On the other hand, all *distresses* are not *proper* in tragedy; but such only as are of force to interest the mind in the *action*, preferably to the observation of the *manners*; which can only be done, or is done most effectually, when the *distressful event*, represented, is taken from *public life*. So that the *distresses*, spoken of, are equally unsuited to what the natures *both of comedy and tragedy*, respectively, demand.

## C H A P. III.

## OF M. DE FONTENELLE'S NOTION OF COMEDY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the pains I have taken, in the preceding chapters, to establish my theory of the comic drama, I find myself obliged to support it still further against the authority of a very eminent modern critic. M. de Fontenelle hath just now published two volumes of plays,  
among



among which are some comedies of a very singular character. They are not only in a high degree *pathetic*; but the scene of them is laid in *antiquity*; and great personages, such as *Kings, Princesses, &c.* are of the drama. He hath besides endeavoured to justify this extraordinary species of comedy by a very ingenious preface. It will therefore be necessary for me to examine this new system, and to obviate, as far as I can, the prejudices which the name of the author, and the intrinsic merit of the plays themselves, will occasion in favour of it.

His system, as explained in the preface to these comedies, is, briefly, this.

“ The *subject* of dramatic representation, he observes, is some event or action  
 “ of *human life*, which can be considered  
 “ only in two views, as being either that  
 “ of *public*, or of *private*, persons. The  
 “ end of such representation, continues he,  
 “ is to *please*, which it doth, either by  
 “ engaging the attention, or by moving  
 “ the passions. The *former* is done by  
 “ representing to us such events as are  
 P 3 “ great,

“ *great, noble, or unexpected*: The latter by  
 “ such as are *dreadful, pitiable, tender, or*  
 “ *pleasant*. Of these several sources of  
 “ *pleasure*, he forms what he calls a *dramatic*  
 “ *scale*, the extremes of which he admits to  
 “ be altogether inconsistent; no art being  
 “ sufficient to bring together the *grand*, the  
 “ *noble*, or the *terrible*, into the same piece  
 “ with the *pleasant or ridiculous*. The im-  
 “ pressions of these objects, he allows, are  
 “ perfectly opposed to each other. So  
 “ that a tragedy, which takes for its subject  
 “ a *noble, or terrible* event, can by no  
 “ means admit the *pleasant*. And a co-  
 “ medy, which represents a *pleasant* action,  
 “ can never admit the *terrible or noble*.  
 “ But it is otherwise, he conceives, with the  
 “ intermediate species of this scale. The  
 “ *singular, the pitiable, the tender*, which  
 “ fill up the interval betwixt the *noble* and  
 “ *ridiculous*, are equally consistent with  
 “ tragedy and comedy. An uncommon  
 “ stroke of Fortune may as well befall a  
 “ peasant as a prince. And two lovers of  
 “ an inferior condition may have as lively  
 “ a passion for each other, and, when some  
 “ unlucky

“unlucky event separates them, may de-  
“serve our pity as much, as those of the  
“highest fortune. These situations then  
“are equally suited to both dramas. They  
“will only be modified in each a little differ-  
“ently. From hence he concludes, that  
“there may be *dramatic representations*,  
“which are neither perfectly tragedies nor  
“perfectly comedies, but yet partake of the  
“nature of each, and that in different pro-  
“portions. There might be a species of  
“*tragedy*, for instance; which should unite  
“the *tender* with the *noble* in any degree,  
“or even subsist entirely by means of the  
“*tender*: And of *comedy*, which should  
“associate the *tender* with the *pleasant*, or  
“even retain the *tender* throughout to a  
“certain degree to the entire exclusion of  
“the *pleasant*.

“As to his laying the *scene* of his co-  
“medy in Greece, he thinks this practice  
“sufficiently justified by the practice of the  
“French writers, who make no scruple to  
“lay their scene abroad, as in *Spain* or  
“*England*.

“ Lastly, for what concerns the introduction of great personages into the comic drama, he observes, that by *ordinary life*, which he supposes the proper subject of comedy, he understands as well that of Emperors and Princes, at times when they are only men, as of inferior persons. And he thinks it very evident that what passes in the *ordinary life*, so understood, of the greatest men, is truly comick [k].”

This is a simple exposition of M. de Fontenelle’s idea of comedy, which, however, he hath set off with great elegance and a plausibility of illustration, such as writers of his class are never at a loss to give to any subject they would recommend.

Now though the principal aim of what I have to offer in confutation of this system be to combat the ingenious writer’s notion of comedy; yet as the tenor of his *preface* leads him to deliver his sentiments also of tragedy, I shall not scruple intermixing, after his example, some reflexions on this latter drama.

[k] *Pref. generale*, tom. vii. Par. 1751.

M. de

M. de Fontenelle sets out with observing, that the end of dramatic representation is to *please*. This end is very general. But he explains himself more precisely, by saying, "*this pleasure is of two kinds, and consists either in attaching the mind, or affecting it.*" And this is not much amiss. But his further explanation of these terms is suspicious. "The mind, says he, is ATTACHED by the representation of what "is great, noble, singular, or unexpected: It "is AFFECTED by what is terrible, pitiable, "tender, or pleasant [1]." In this enumeration, he forgets the merely *natural* draught of the manners. Yet this is surely one of the means by which the drama is enabled to *attach* the spectator. With me, I confess, this is the first excellence of comedy. Nor could he mean to include this source of pleasure under his *second* division. For though a lively picture of the manners may in some sort be said to *affect* us, yet

[1] "On attache par le grand, par le noble, par le rare, par l'imprévu. On émeut par le terrible ou affreux, par le pitoyable, par le tendre, par le plaisant ou ridicule." p. xiv.

certainly

certainly not as coming under the consideration of what is *terrible, pitiable, tender, or ridiculous*, but simply of what is *natural*. The picture is *pleasant* or otherwise, as it chances; but is always the source of entertainment to the observer. When the pleasantry is high, it takes indeed the passion of *ridicule*. In other instances, it can scarcely be said to *move*, "emouvoir." Now this I take to be a very considerable omission. For if the observation of character be a *pleasure*, which comedy is more particularly qualified to give, and which is not in any degree so compatible with tragedy, does not this bid fair for being the *proper* end of comedy? Human life, he says, which is the subject of the drama, can only be regarded in two views, as either that of *the great, and principally of kings*, and that of *private men*. Now the *attachments and emotions*, he speaks of, are excited more powerfully and to more advantage in a representation of the *former*. That which is *peculiar* to a draught of *ordinary life*, or which is attained *most perfectly* by it, is the delight arising from a just exhibition of the manners. No, he



he will say. The *pleasant* belongs as peculiarly to a picture of common life, as the *natural*. Surely not. Common life *distorted*, or what we call *farce*, gives the entertainment of *ridicule* more perfectly than comedy. The only pleasure, which an exposition of *ordinary life* affords, distinct from that we receive from a view of *high life* on the one hand, and ordinary life *disfigured* on the other, is the satisfaction of contemplating the *truth of character*. However then this species of representation may be improved by incorporating other kinds of excellence with it, is not *this, of pleasing* by the *truth* of character, to be considered as the *appropriate* end of comedy?

I do not dispute the propriety of serious or even affecting comedies. I have already explained myself as to this point, and have shewn under what restrictions *the weeping comedy, la larmoyante comedie*, as the French call it; may be admitted on my plan. The main question is, whether there be any foundation in nature for two distinct and separate species *only* of the drama; or  
whether,

whether, as he pretends, a certain *scale*, which connects by an insensible communication the several modifications of dramatic representation, unites and incorporates the two species into one.

It is true the laws of the drama, as formed by Aristotle out of the Greek poets, can of themselves be no rule to us in this matter; because these poets had given no example of such intermediate species. This, for aught appears to the contrary, may be an extension of the province of the drama. The question then must be tried by the success of this new practice, compared with the general dictates of common sense.

For I perfectly agree with this judicious critic, that we have a right to inquire if, in what concerns the stage, we are not sometimes governed by *established customs* instead of rules; for *rules* they will not deserve to be esteemed, till they have undergone the rigid scrutiny of reason [*m*].

[*m*] “ Que nous sommes en droit d'examiner si,  
 “ en fait de Theatre, nous n'aurions pas quelquefois  
 “ des *habitudes* au lieu de *regles*, car les *regles* ne  
 In

In respect of the *Practice*, then, it must be owned, there are many stories in private life capable of being worked up in such a manner as to move the passions strongly; and, on the contrary, many subjects taken from the great world capable of diverting the spectator by a pleasant picture of the manners. And lastly, it is also true, that both these ends may be affected together, in some degree, in either piece. But here is the point of enquiry. Whether, if the end in view be to *affect*, this will not be accomplished BETTER by taking a subject from the public than private fortunes of men: Or, if the end be to *please by the truth of character*, whether we are not likely to perceive this pleasure more FULLY when the story is of private, rather than of public life? For, as Aristotle said finely on a like occasion, *we are not to look for every sort of pleasure from tragedy [or comedy], but that which is peculiarly proper to each* [n].

“peuvent l’être qu’après avoir subi les rigueurs du tribunal de la raison.” p. 37.

[n] Οὐ πάντας διὰ ζήλειον ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας, ἀλλὰ τὴν εἰκασίαν. Ποιητ. κ. ιδ’.

“ Human

“ Human life, this writer says, can be considered but as *high* or *low* ;” and “ a representation of it can please only as it *attaches*, or *affects*.” I ask then, to which sort of life shall the dramatic poet confine himself, when he would endeavour to raise these *affections* or these *attachments* to the highest pitch. The answer is plain. For if the poet would excite the tender passions, they will rise higher of necessity, when awakened by noble subjects, than if called forth by such as are of ordinary and familiar notice. This is occasioned by what one may call a TRANSITION OF THE PASSIONS ; that affection of the mind which is produced by the impression of great objects, being more easily convertible into the stronger degrees of pity and commiseration, than such as arises from a view of the concerns of common life. The more *important* the interest, the greater part our minds take in it, and the more susceptible are we of *passion*.

On the other hand, when the intended pleasure is to result from strong pictures of human nature, this will be felt more entirely,

entirely, and with more sincerity, when we are at leisure to attend to them in the representation of inferior persons, than when the rank of the speaker, or dignity of the subject, is constantly drawing some part of our observation to itself. In a word, though *mixed dramas* may give us pleasure, yet the pleasure, in either kind, will be less in proportion to the mixture. And the *end* of each will be then attained most PERFECTLY when its character, according to the antient practice, is observed.

To consider then the writer's favourite position, that *le pitoyable* and *le tendre* are "common both to tragedy and comedy."

The position, in general, is true. The difficulty is in fixing the degree, with which it ought to prevail in each. If *passion* predominates in a picture of private life, I call it a *tragedy* of private story, because it produces the *end* which tragedy designs. If *humour* predominates in a draught of public life, I call it a *comedy* of public story, because it gives the *pleasure* of pure comedy. Let these then be two new species of the drama, if you please, and let new names

names be invented for them. Yet, were I a poet, I should certainly adhere to the old practice. That is, if I wanted to produce *passion*, I should think myself able to raise it highest on a great subject. And if I aimed to *attach* by *humour*, I should depend on catching the whole attention of the spectator more successfully on a familiar subject.

But by a *familiar subject*, this critic will say, he means, as I do, a subject taken from *ordinary life*; and that the affairs of kings and princes may very properly come into comedy under this view. Besides the reason already produced against this innovation, I have this further exception to it. The business of comedy, he will allow, is in part at least to exhibit the *manners*. Now the princely or heroic comedy is singularly improper for this end. If persons of so distinguished a rank be the actors in comedy, propriety demands that they be shewn in conformity to their characters in real life. But now that very politeness, which reigns in the courts of princes and the houses of the great, prevents the *manners* from shew-  
ing



ing themselves, at least with that distinctness and *relief* which we look for in dramatic characters. Inferior personages, acting with less reserve and caution, afford the fittest occasion to the poet of expressing their genuine tempers and dispositions. Or, if a picture of the manners be expected from the introduction of great persons, it can be only in tragedy, where the importance of the interests, and the strong play of the passions, strip them of their borrowed disguises, and lay open their true characters. So that the princely, or *heroic*, comedy, is the least fitted, of any kind of drama, to furnish this pleasure.

The antients appear to have had no doubt at all on the matter. The tragedy on low life, and comedy on high life, were refinements altogether unknown to them. What then hath occasioned this revolution of taste amongst us? Principally, I conceive, these three things.

I. The comedy on high life hath arisen from a *different state of government*. In the free towns of Greece there was no room for that distinction of high and low comedy,

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which

which the moderns have introduced. And the reason was, the members of those communities were so nearly on a level, that any one was a representative of the rest. There was no standing subordination of royalty, nobility, and commonalty, as with us. Their way of ennobling their characters was by making them Generals, Ambassadors, Magistrates, &c. and then, in that public view, they were fit personages for tragedy. When stripped of these ensigns of authority, they became simple citizens.

Amongst us, persons of elevated rank make a separate order in the community, whose private lives however might, no doubt, be the subject of comic representation. Why then are not these fit personages for comedy? The reason has been given. They want *dramatic manners*. Or if they did not, their elevated and separate estate makes the generality conceive with such reverence of them, that it would shock their notions of high life to see them employed in a course of comic adventures. And of this M. de Fontenelle himself was sufficiently sensible. For speaking in another

other place of the importance which the tragic action receives from the dignity of its persons, he says, "When the actions are  
 " of such a kind as that, without losing any  
 " thing of their beauty, they might pass be-  
 " tween inferior persons, the names of kings  
 " and princes are nothing but a foreign  
 " ornament which the poet gives to his  
 " subject. Yet *this ornament, foreign as it*  
 " *may be, is necessary : so fated are we to be*  
 " *always dazzled by titles* [o]." Should he  
 not have seen then, that this pageantry of  
 titles, which is so requisite to raise the dig-  
 nity of the tragic drama, must for the same  
 reason prevent the familiarity of the comic ?  
 The great themselves are, no doubt, in this,  
 as other instances, above *vulgar* preju-  
 dices. But the dramatic poet writes for the  
 people.

2. The tragedy on low life, I suspect, has  
 been chiefly owing to our *modern romances* :  
 which have brought the tender passion  
 into great repute. It is the constant and  
 almost sole object of *le pitoyable* and *le*  
*tendre* in our drama. Now the prevalency

[o] *Reflex. sur la poés.* p. 132.

of this passion, in all degrees, hath made it thought an indifferent matter, whether the story, that exemplifies it, be taken from low or high life. As it rages equally in both, the pathos, it was believed, would be just the same. And it is true, if tragedy confine itself to the display of this passion, the difference will be less sensible than in other instances. Because the concern terminates more directly in the *tender pair* themselves, and does not so necessarily extend itself to others. Yet to heighten this same pathos by the *grand* and *important*, would methinks be the means of affording a still higher pleasure.

3. After all, that effusion of *softness* which prevails to such a degree in all our dramas, comic as well as tragic, to the exclusion of every other interest, is, perhaps, best accounted for by this writer. As the matter is delicate, I chuse to give it in his own words : “ On s’imagine naturellement, “ que les pièces Grecques & les nôtres ont “ été jugées au même tribunal, à celui d’un “ public assés egal dans les deux nations ; “ mais cela n’est pas tout-a-fait vrai. Dans “ le

“ le tribunal d’Athenes, *les femmes* n’avoient  
 “ pas de voix, ou n’en avoient que très  
 “ peu. Dans le tribunal de Paris, c’est  
 “ précisément le contraire; ici il est donc  
 “ question de plaire aux femmes, qui assuré-  
 “ ment aimeront mieux le pitoyable & le  
 “ tendre, que terrible et même le grand.”  
 He adds, “ *Et je ne crois pas au fond qu’elles*  
 “ *ayent grand tort.*” And what gallant  
 man but would subscribe to this opinion?

On the whole, this attempt of M. de Fontenelle, to innovate in the province of comedy, puts one in mind of that he made, many years ago, in pastoral poetry. It is exactly the same spirit which has governed this polite writer in both adventures. He was once for bringing courtiers in masquerade into *Arcadia*. And now he would set them unmasked on the comic stage. Here, at least, he thought they would be in place. But the simplicity of pastoral dialogue would not suffer the one; and the familiarity of comic action forbids the other. It must be confessed, however, he hath succeeded better in the example of his comedies, than his pastorals. And no wonder.

For what we call the *fashions* and *manners* are confined to certain conditions of life, so that *pastoral courtiers* are an evident contradiction and absurdity. But the *appetites* and *passions* extending through all ranks, hence low tricks and low amours are thought to suit the minister and sharper alike. However it be, the fact is, that M. de Fontenelle hath succeeded best in his *comedies*. And as his theory is likely to gain more credit from the success of his practice than the force of his reasoning, I think it proper to close these remarks with an observation or two upon it.

There are, I observed, three things to be considered in his comedies, *his introduction of great personages, his practice of laying the scene in antiquity, and his pathos.*

Now to see the impropriety of the *first* of these innovations, we need only observe with what art he endeavours to conceal it. His very dexterity in managing his comic heroes clearly shews the natural repugnance he felt in his own mind betwixt the representation of such characters. and even his own idea of the comic drama.

The



The TYRANT is a strange title of a comedy. It required singular address to familiarize this frightful personage to our conceptions. Which yet he hath tolerably well done, but by such expedients as confute his general theory. For to bring him down to the level of a comic character, he gives us to understand, that the *Tyrant* was an usurper, who from a very mean birth had forced his way into the tyranny. And to lower him still more, we find him represented, not only as odious to his people, but of a very contemptible character. He further makes him the tyrant only of a small Greek town; so that he passes, with the modern reader, for little more than the Mayor of a corporation. There is also a plain illusion in making a *simple citizen* demand his daughter in marriage. For under the cover of this word, which conveys the idea of a person in lower life, we think very little of the dignity of a free citizen of Corinth. Whence it appears that the poet felt the necessity of unkinging this tyrant as far as possible, before he could make a comic character of him.

The case of his *ABDOLONIME* is still easier. It is true, the structure of the fable requires us to have an eye to royalty ; but all the pride and pomp of the regal character is studiously kept out of sight. Besides, the affair of royalty does not commence till the action draws to a conclusion, the persons of the drama being all simple particulars, and even of the lowest figure, through the entire course of it.

The King of Sidon is, further, a paltry sovereign, and a creature of Alexander. And the characters of the persons, which are indeed admirably touched, are purposely contrived to lessen our ideas of sovereignty.

The *LYSIANASSE* is a tragedy in form, of that kind which hath a happy catastrophe. The *persons, subject*, every thing so important, and attaches the mind so intirely to the event, that nothing interests more.

As to his *laying the scene in antiquity, and especially in the free towns of Greece*, I would recommend it as an admirable expedient to all those who are disposed to follow

follow him in this new province of heroic comedy. For amongst other advantages, it gives the writer an occasion to fill the courts of his princes with *simple citizens*, which, as was observed, by no means answer to our ideas of nobility. But in any other view I cannot say much for the practice. It is for obvious reasons highly inconvenient. Even this writer found it so, when in one of his plays, the *MACATE*, he was obliged to break through the propriety of antient manners in order to adapt himself to the modern taste. His duel, as he himself says, "*a l'air bien François et bien peu Grec.*" The reader, if he pleases, may see his apology for this transgression of decorum. Or, if there were no inconvenience of this sort, the representation of characters after the *antique* must, on many occasions, be cold and disgusting. At least none but professed scholars can be taken with it.

Nor is the usage of the Latin writers any precedent. For, besides that Horace, we know, condemned it as suitable only to the infancy of their comic poetry, the manners,

ners, laws, religion of the Greeks were in the main so similar to their own, that the difference was hardly discernible. Or if it were otherwise in some points, the neighbourhood of this famous people and the intercourse the Romans had with them, would bring them perfectly acquainted with such difference. And this last reflexion shews how insufficient it was for the author to excuse his own practice from the authority of his countrymen; who, says he, "never scruple laying their scene in "Spain or England." Are the manners of antient Greece as familiar to a French pit, as those of these two countries?

Lastly, I have very little to object to the *pathos* of his comedy. When it is subservient to the *manners*, as in the TESTAMENT and ABDOLONIME, I think it admirable. When it exceeds this degree, and takes the attention intirely, as in the LYSIANASSE, it gives a pleasure indeed, but not the pleasure appropriate to comedy. I regard it as a faint imperfect species of tragedy. After all, I fear, the *tender and pitiable* in comedy, though it must

must afford the highest pleasure to sensible and elegant minds, is not perfectly suited to the apprehensions of the generality. Are they susceptible of the soft and delicate emotions which the fine distress in the *Testament* is intended to raise? Every one indeed is capable of being delighted through the *passions*; but they must be worked up, as in tragedy, to a greater height, before the generality can receive that delight from them. The same objection, it will be said, holds against the finer strokes of character. Not, I think, with the same force. I doubt our sense of imitation, especially of the *ridiculous*, is quicker than our humanity. But I determine nothing. Both these pleasures are perfectly consistent. And my idea of comedy requires only that the *pathos* be kept in subordination to the *manners*.

## CHAP. IV.

## OF THE PROVINCE OF FARCE.

THUS much then for the general idea of COMEDY. If considered more accurately it is, further, of *two kinds*. And in considering these we shall come at a just notion of the province of FARCE. For this *mirror of private life* either, 1. reflects such qualities and characters, as are common to *human nature at large*: or, 2. it represents the whims, extravagances, and caprices, which characterize the folly of *particular persons or times*.

Again, *each* of these is, further, to be subdivided into *two species*. For 1. the representations of *common nature* may either be taken *accurately*, so as to reflect a *faithful and exact image* of their original; which alone is *that* I would call COMEDY, as best agreeing to the description which Cicero gives of it, when he terms it IMAGINEM VERITATIS. Or, they may be forced and overcharged above the simple and just proportions of *nature*; as when the



the excesses of a *few* are given for *standing* characters, when not the man is described, but the *passion*, or when, in the draught of the man, the leading *feature* is extended beyond measure: And in these cases the representation holds of the lower province of FARCE. In like manner, 2. the other *species*, consisting in the representation of *partial nature*, either transcribes such characters as are peculiar to *certain countries or times*, of which *our comedy* is, in great measure, made up; or it presents the image of *some real individual person*; which was the distinguishing character of the *old comedy* properly so called.

Both these kinds evidently belong to FARCE: not only as failing in that general and universal imitation of nature, which is alone deserving the name of comedy, but, also, for this reason, that, being more directly written for the present purpose of discrediting certain *characters or persons*, it is found convenient to exaggerate their peculiarities and enlarge their features; and

and so, on a double account, they are to be referred to that *class*.

And thus the *three forms of dramatic composition*, the only ones which good sense acknowledges, are kept distinct: and the proper **END** and **CHARACTER** of each, clearly understood.

1. *Tragedy and Comedy*, by their lively but faithful representations, cannot fail to *instruct*. Such natural exhibitions of the human character, being set before us in the clear mirror of the drama, must needs serve to the highest *moral uses*, in awakening that instinctive approbation, which we cannot withhold from *virtue*, or in provoking the not less necessary detestation of *vice*. But this, though it be their best *use*, is by no means their primary *intention*. Their proper and immediate *end* is, to PLEASE: the *one*, more especially by interesting the *affections*; the *other*, by a *just and delicate imitation of real life*. *Farce*, on the contrary, professes to *entertain*; but this, in order more effectually to serve

serve the interests of virtue and good sense. Its proper *end* and purpose (if we allow it to have any reasonable one) is, then, to INSTRUCT. Which the reader will understand me as saying, not of what we know by the name of *farce* on the modern stage (whose *prime* intention can hardly be thought even that low one, ascribed to it by Mr. Dryden, of entertaining *citizens, country gentlemen, and Covent-Garden fops*), but of the legitimate *end* of this *drama*; known to the Antients under the name of the *old Comedy*, but having neither name nor existence, properly speaking, among the Moderns. Of which we may say, as Mr. Dryden did, but with less propriety, of Comedy, "*That it is a sharp manner of instruction for the vulgar, who are never well amended, till they are more than sufficiently exposed.*" [Pref. to Transl. of Fresnoy, p. xix.]

2. Though tragedy and comedy respect the *same general END*, yet pursuing it by *different means*; hence it comes to pass, their CHARACTERS are wholly different.

For

For tragedy, aiming at *pleasure* principally through the *affections*, whose flow must not be checked and interrupted by any counter impressions: and comedy, as we have seen, addressing itself *principally* to our *natural sense of resemblance and imitation*; it follows, that the *ridiculous* can never be associated with tragedy, without destroying its *nature*, though with the *serious comic* it very well consents.

And here the *practice* coincides with the *rule*. All exact writers, though they constantly mix *grave and pleasant* scenes together in the same *comedy*, yet never presume to do this in *tragedy*, and so keep the two species of *tragedy and comedy* themselves perfectly distinct. But,

3. It is quite otherwise with *comedy and farce*. These almost perpetually run into each other. And yet the reason of the thing demands as intire and perfect a separation in this case, as in the other. For the perfection of *comedy* lying in the accuracy and fidelity of universal representation, and *farce* professedly neglecting or rather purposely

posely transgressing the limits of common nature and just decorum, they clash entirely with each other. And *comedy* must so far fail of giving the *pleasure*, appropriate to its design, as it allies itself with *farce*; while *farce*, on the other hand, forfeits the *use*, it intends, of promoting popular ridicule, by restraining itself within the exact rules of *Nature* which Comedy observes.

But there is little occasion to guard against this *latter* abuse. The danger is all on the other side. And the passion for what is now called *Farce*, the shadow of the Old Comedy, has, in fact, possessed the modern poets to such a degree, that we have scarcely one example of a comedy without this gross mixture. If any are to be excepted from this censure in Moliere, they are his *Misanthrope*, and *Tartuffe*; which are accordingly, by common allowance, the best of his large collection. In proportion as his other plays have less or more of this farcical turn, their true value hath been long since determined.

Of our own comedies, such of them, I mean, as are worthy of criticism, Ben Jon-

son's *Alchemist* and *Volpone* bid the fairest for being written in this genuine unmixed manner. Yet, though their merits are very great, severe Criticism might find something to object even to these. The *ALCHEMIST*, some will think, is exaggerated throughout; and so, at best, belongs to that species of comedy which we have before called *particular and partial*. At least, the extravagant pursuit, so strongly exposed in that play, hath now, of a long time, been forgotten; so that we find it difficult to enter fully into the humour of this highly-wrought character. And, in general, we may remark of such characters, that they are a strong temptation to the writer to exceed the bounds of truth in his draught of them at *first*, and are further liable to an imperfect, and even unfair, sentence from the reader *afterwards*. For the welcome reception, which these pictures of prevailing *local* folly meet with on the stage, cannot but induce the poet, almost without design, to inflame the representation: and the want of *archetypes*, in a little time, makes it pass for immoderate,



derate, were it originally given with ever so much discretion and justice. So that, whether the *Alchemist* be farcical or not, it will appear, at least, to have this note of Farce, "That the principal character is "exaggerated." But then this is all we must affirm. For, as to the *subject* of this Play's being a *local folly*, which seems to bring it directly under the denomination of Farce, it is but just to make a distinction. Had the *end and purpose* of the Play been to expose *Alchemy*, it had been liable to this objection. But this mode of *local folly* is employed as the *means* only of exposing *another* folly, extensive as our Nature, and coeval with it, namely *Avarice*. So that the subject has all the requisites of true *Comedy*. It is just otherwise, we may observe, in the *Devil's an Ass*; which therefore properly falls under our censure. For there, the folly of the time, *Projects and Monopolies*, are brought in to be exposed as the *end and purpose* of the comedy.

On the whole, the *Alchemist* is a Comedy in just form, but a little *Farcical* in the extension of one of its characters.

The VOLPONE is a subject so manifestly fitted for the entertainment of all times, that it stands in need of no vindication. Yet neither, I am afraid, is this Comedy, in all respects, a complete model. There are even some Incidents of a farcical invention; particularly, the *Mountebank Scene*, and *Sir Politique's Tortoise*, are in the taste of the *old comedy*; and without its rational purpose. Besides, the *humour* of the dialogue is sometimes on the point of becoming inordinate, as may be seen in the pleasantry of *Corbaccio's mistakes through deafness*, and in other instances. And we shall not wonder, that the best of his plays are liable to some objections of this sort, if we attend to the *character* of the writer. For his nature was severe and rigid; and this, in giving a strength and manliness, gave at times too an intemperance to his satyr. His taste for ridicule was strong, but indelicate; which made him not over-curious in the choice of his *topics*. And, lastly, his *style* in picturing characters, though masterly, was without that elegance of *band* which is required to correct and allay the force of  
of

of so bold a colouring. Thus, the bias of his nature leading him to Plautus, rather than Terence, for his model, it is not to be wondered, that his wit is too frequently caustic, his raillery coarse, and his humour excessive.

Some later writers for the stage have, no doubt, avoided these defects of the exactest of our old dramatists. But do they reach his excellencies? Posterity, I am afraid, will judge otherwise, whatever may be now thought of some more fashionable comedies. And, if they do not, neither the state of general manners, nor the turn of the public taste, appears to be such as countenances the expectation of greater improvements. To those, who are not over-sanguine in their hopes, our forefathers will perhaps be thought to have furnished (what in nature seem linked together) the fairest example of *dramatic*, as of *real manners*.

But here it will probably be said, an affected zeal for the honour of our old poets has betrayed their unwary advocate into a concession which discredits his whole pains

on this subject. For to what purpose, may it be asked, this waste of dramatic criticism, when, by the allowance of the idle speculatist himself, his theory is likely to prove so unprofitable, at least, if it be not ill-founded? The only part I can take in this nice conjuncture is, to screen myself behind the authority of a much abler critical theorist, who had once the misfortune to find himself in these unlucky circumstances, and has apologized for it. The *objection* is fairly urged by this fine writer; and, in so profound and speculative an age as the present, I presume to suggest no other answer than he has thought fit to give to it.

“ Speculations of this sort, says he, do not  
 “ bestow genius on those who have it not;  
 “ they do not perhaps afford any great  
 “ assistance to those who have; and most  
 “ commonly the men of genius are even  
 “ incapable of being assisted by speculation.  
 “ To what use then do they serve? why,  
 “ to lead up *to the first principles of beauty*  
 “ such persons as love reasoning, and are  
 “ fond of reducing, under the controul of  
 “ philosophy, subjects that appear the  
 “ most

“most independent of it, and which are  
 “generally thought abandoned to the ca-  
 “price of taste [*p*].”

[*p*] “Ces sortes de speculations ne donnent point  
 “de genie à ceux qui en manquent; elles n’aident  
 “beaucoup ceux qui en ont: et le plus souvent même  
 “les gens de génie sont incapables d’être aidées par  
 “les speculations. A quoi donc sont-elles bonnes?  
 “A faire remonter jusqu’aux premieres idées du beau  
 “quelques gens qui aiment la raisonnement, et se  
 “plaisent à reduire sous l’empire de la philosophie  
 “les choses qui en paroissent le plus indépendantes,  
 “et que l’on croit communément abandonnées à la  
 “bizarrerie des goûts.”

M. DE FONTENELLE.

*The* END of the SECOND VOLUME.

